SPORTS / A27
Cojuangco scores win vs Macapagal in POC elections

ACROSS / A17
Senate to probe 'killing field' in Hanjin shipyard

BUSINESS / B1
Landbank, SSS selling Meralco stakes for P83/share

Big 3, other oil firms cut price by ₱5 per liter

By Reinel W. Domingo

OIL COMPANIES YESTERDAY announced further cuts in the price of diesel and kerosene by ₱2 a liter, and of gasoline by ₱5 a liter.

The cut in gasoline prices is the biggest yet for the fuel of choice of private vehicle owners, breaching the ₱50 mark at the pumps in some petrol stations.

The price reductions announced by Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Chevron Phil. Total Phil. Corp., PTT

ONLINE

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Saturday, November 29, 2008 ★★ 18 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 155 P18 website www.inquirer.net

RESCUE MISSION A masked Indian commando, one of 17, drops from a chopper onto the roof of an office-residential complex housing a Jewish center in Mumbai. AFP

150 dead, 370 wounded

ONE OF THE attackers in the premises of Mumbai's main station where they opened down commuters catching the train bound for home late Wednesday night. REUTERS

India blames Pakistan as anger mounts over attacks

OUT OF HARM'S WAY A guest of the besieged five-star Oberoi Hotel in Mumbai is evacuated on Friday after commandos clear the hotel floor by floor. Hundreds of guests had been trapped in the Oberoi and at landmark Taj Mahal Palace and Tower hotel. REUTERS

PIGEON HOLED A security force personnel takes a firing position during a heavy exchange of gunfire with terrorists outside the Taj. Indian newspapers have slammed the government's intelligence agencies for failing to prevent the attacks. REUTERS

MUMBAI, INDIA—MORE than 150 people have been killed since gunmen attacked 10 sites across India's financial capital starting Wednesday night, including 22 foreigners—two of them Americans, officials said yesterday.

As anger mounted, India blamed "elements" from Pakistan for the coordinated assault, which seemed designed to scare off foreign executives and tourists.

Pakistan said the two countries faced a common enemy. Urging New Delhi not to play politics, it agreed to send its spy chief to share intelligence on the suicide attacks.

Officials have been wooing to bring a quick end to the stand-off that they say has also wounded 370.

Earlier on Friday, masked Indian commandos dropped from helicopters onto the roof of a Jewish center in Mumbai where Muslim militants were holed up, possibly with hostages, as sharpshooters kept up a

ON DEADLY A12

PDI man tops Burgos biotech journ award

AN INQUIRER STORY ON HOW THE carabao holds the key to the commercial production of biofuel in the country bagged first prize for Best Feature Story at the 2008 Jose G. Burgos Jr. Awards for Biotech Journalism.

Anabelen Roque, 70, Nueva Ecija-based correspondent for the Inquirer, wrote the winning story, "Carabao may be key to biofuel, says scientist," published on Jan. 27. It bested 745 articles, which appeared in various national dailies, winning for him a cash prize of ₱30,000.

Roque's story, which appeared in the section, Across the Nation, featured

PDI MAN A8

Noli opposes proposals to extend term

By Christine Y. Esguerra

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO IS opposed to proposals to postpone the May 2010 polls and extend the terms of President Macapagal-Arroyo and all other elected officials.

Such a move will have a negative impact on the people, he said.

"They want to change the officials of government from the President down, and then you'll tell them that you'll extend their terms even for one year. I don't think so (Malabo yan)," De Castro said in Filipino in an ambush interview yesterday at the 7th-anniversary celebration of BizNews Asia magazine in Makati City.

While acknowledging that such a move would benefit him as an incumbent, the Vice President said the twin proposals—imposed at the House of Representatives early this week—would be taken badly by the public. "It will be quite negative for our people if you extend our term ... I'm not in favor of that."

Asked specifically about delaying the general elections, he replied: "All the more [will it be negative to the people] because they are looking forward to the 2010 elections."

NOLI A8

Thai protesters agree to hold talks with gov't

BANGKOK—PROTESTERS LAYING siege to Bangkok's two main airports have agreed to hold formal talks today with Thai authorities following initial contacts, a police commander said.

Hundreds of police had also moved into position outside Suvarnabhumi international airport but it was "not for a crackdown," regional police deputy commander Maj. Gen. Piya Sorn-ruksa said yesterday.

Embattled Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat imposed a state of emergency around the airports on Thursday

THAI PROTESTERS A13

One year later, Magdalo recruits civilians online

By Jocelyn R. Uy

WHEN THEY BORE ARMS IN DEFIance of the Arroyo administration exactly a year ago today, they were holed up in a posh hotel in Makati City, waiting for civilian support that never came.

Renegade officers who call themselves the Magdalo group mark today the first anniversary of their failed rebellion at the Manila Peninsula by

ONE YEAR A11

RAMON MUYOT

Noise barrage on, '1st in a salvo' of protest

LET'S HEAR IT FOR TRANSPARENCY Civil society groups hold a noise barrage along Ayala Ave. in protest. Chucha. Among the rallymakers are Bp. Ambo Lubiro (extreme left), president of DLSU, Jon Lucuda and Greg Dolor (extreme right).

By Reinel W. Domingo

BUSINESS, RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL opposition leaders last night led about a thousand noise-makers in what they called "the first in a salvo" of protest actions against fresh moves by administration allies to amend the Constitution purportedly to extend the term of President Macapagal-Arroyo beyond 2010.

Gathered around the monument of martyred former Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, they blew whistles, banged drums and

NOISE A11

Local execs haggled with Bolante for higher kickbacks, says witness

By TJ Burgonio and Christine O. Avendaño

IN 2004, SOME LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFficials haggled with then Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn "Joc-joc" Bolante to increase their kickbacks from the ₱728-million fertilizer fund.

This claim was made yesterday by witness Jose Barredo Jr. when he testified at the Senate blue ribbon committee's inquiry into the fund scam, and faced off with Bolante for the first time.

Barredo admitted that he worked for Bolante's alleged runner Marlene "Tess" Ayiona, and that he "negotiated" with governors of the fertilizer fund such as congressman, governors and mayors.

He said he spoke with officials in the

LOCAL A20

Joc-joc's ex-agri aide PE graduate

By TJ Burgonio

IMAGINE A PHYSICAL EDUCAtion graduate to juicy postings at the Department of Agriculture and then on to a cash-rich pension fund.

At the Senate blue ribbon committee's inquiry into the ₱728-million fertilizer fund scam, former Assistant Agriculture Secretary Buenaventura Pedigan yesterday said he was holding a

JOC-JOC'S A20

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Workers are Samal Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with some isolated rain in Ilocos Norte and Apayao. Northern Luzon and Southern Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies and the rest of the country will have partly cloudy skies.

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rain	Cotabato	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rain	Davao	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rain	Iloilo	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rain	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Cauayan	Cloudy with Rain	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Catarman	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Puerto Princesa	Cloudy with Rain	Butuan	Partly Cloudy

EZ2
1 5 12 3

SUERTRES
2 4 9
7 5 9

FOUR DIGIT
8 4 0 8

1 6 5

MEGALOTTO 6/45
4 17 26 29 30 38
P66,616,527.60

Palace denies Linden payoffs

By Christian V. Esguerra

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY VEHEMENTLY DENIED the allegation that it had bribed administration congressmen into scrapping earlier this week the latest impeachment complaint against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"This is pure intrigue, absolute hogwash," Unlisted Claudio, presidential adviser on political affairs, told the Inquirer in a phone interview. "It's appalling how the opposition can seize it and the media can make a front page story out of it."

While saying he "appreciate[d]" the opposition and media's vigilance on matters such as bribery, he said the reported meeting at Linden Suites in Ortigas Center was "fatal" and merely "black propaganda" against the Arroyo administration.

"It's downright unfair to Congress and the Palace on which the alleged misdeed is being imputed," he said.

Tips on the alleged Linden affair were sent to several newsrooms Tuesday afternoon, the eve of the House committee on justice's vote on the impeachment complaint filed by businessman Jose "Joey" de Venecia III.

The administration-dominated committee eventually junked the complaint via a 42-0 vote. The unanimous decision is expected to be adopted during plenary session next week.

Claudio said he had inquired with several congressmen about the reported payoff, but all of them denied knowledge of such a meeting.

He said he would attend a "social event" at Linden Suites this evening and would use the opportunity to "personally investigate the matter." He said he and his aide-de-camp would play it by ear.

"I intend to do my own investigation," he said.

The business went to Linden on Tuesday evening based on a tip coming from a civil society figure.

Trainor Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras was spotted at the lobby, but clarified that he was present simply because he rented a restaurant in the hotel. He said he, too, had heard about the reported payoffs and had asked hotel staff to check.

None said the impromptu investigation yielded negative results.

Police still on full alert

POLICE WILL REMAIN ON full alert even with the return of President Macapagal-Arroyo because of the terrorist attacks in Mumbai and the stand-off in Thailand between the government and demonstrators.

Chief Supt. Nestor Bartolome, the Philippine National Police spokesperson, said reminders have been sent to all PNP units to shore up security procedures.

The PNP recently went on full alert when the President leaves the country. Ms Arroyo returned late Thursday from the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders' summit in Lima, Peru.

A full alert means that all 125,000 personnel of the PNP will remain at their posts at all times.

Chief Supt. Edwin Corvera, the head of the Aviation Security Group, security at country's airports has been strengthened because of simultaneous attacks on several targets in Mumbai and the takeover of two airports in Thailand by antigovernment protesters.

"We have released a reminder for our personnel to reinforce their security procedures and preparedness," Corvera said. Alexis Romero

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO gets a welcome kiss from husband Mike Arroyo upon arrival Thursday night.

Enrile urges vigilance: RP may be next Mumbai

SUBIC CITY OF MUSIC—SENATE President Juan Ponce Enrile said everybody should be on the alert especially with the boldness that extremists carry out plots to terrorize urban centers in the world.

"Who knows? Our country may be the next target of terrorists after they conducted bombings of several establishments in Mumbai, India," Enrile said here yesterday.

Enrile said the Philippines is the only large Christian community in Asia and it is not far-fetched to think that it may already be on the list of terror targets.

"In my experience as a former secretary of national defense, I have a feeling that what happened in Mumbai may happen anytime in our country," he said.

Enrile was here as guest of the midyear commencement exercises of the Central Luzon State University.

He was interviewed after his 10-minute speech where he asked the graduates to be highly competitive to survive the global economic crisis.

"The officials, officers and men who are our guardians of peace and order should not be the only ones to be on alert. Every one is called upon to be alert in order to thwart the menace of terrorism," Enrile said.

He he said the government is strong enough and has been installing measures to stop any possible terror attacks similar to what happened in Mumbai.

ENRILE

In his speech, Enrile said in the face of the global crisis, what is important is to support programs that will ensure a highly competitive human resource.

"My priority is education as a tool to ensure a stable nation. There is that felt need to support programs that will provide premium attention in the training of our youth to their basic competencies, especially in mathematics, to develop their mind to logical thinking and in the languages for better communication," Enrile said. Anselmo Roque, Inquirer Central Luzon

Bishop says some solons are unfit to amend Charter

SOME MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF Representatives are unworthy to amend the Constitution because their commitments may be fraught, a Manila prelate has said.

Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo, chair of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace, added that the laws they pass are doubtful, even "self-serving."

"They have no principles and sadly, most of their commitments are up for sale," Pabillo said on why some lawmakers are unfit to change the Constitution as a constituent assembly.

He made the remarks in a Radio Veritas interview, a story of which is posted on the CBCP news website.

Pabillo made them after the House justice panel voted to find the impeachment case against President Macapagal-Arroyo insufficient in substance and amid reports of a Charter change attempt allegedly meant to extend Ms Arroyo's stay in office.

"Progress to help boost the economy should have been passed long before but their interests have focused on Charter change to rob their own agenda," Pabillo said.

The CBCP said its website, believes Charter change should be after the 2010 elections and, if ever, should be through a Constitutional convention where members will be elected. Antonio Sevidores

Appeals court can't free Bolante from Senate hold

By Norman Bordadora

FORMER AGRICULTURE UNDERSECRETARY Jocelyn Bolante's lawyers yesterday failed to convince the Court of Appeals to give him even a temporary relief from being under custody of the Senate.

The court's second division indicated it will overrule on the authority of the Senate to keep a person under guard when the chamber isn't even a respondent in the petition for a writ of habeas corpus filed by Bolante's son Owen early this month.

The division, chaired by CA Justice Portia Aliño-Hormachuelos, instead gave the parties 10 days within which to file their respective memoranda before it decides on Bolante's bid to be released from Senate custody.

Bolante, accompanied by his son Owen and their respective lawyers, appeared in yesterday's first hearing on his habeas corpus petition.

With Bolante's appearance to court, his supposed recognition of the Senate authority to investigate him, and his "reliance" from the confines of the Senate, Senate legal counsel David Yap argued for the dismissal of the case for being moot.

Bolante's lawyers, on the other hand, continued to argue that the order of arrest was issued by the Senate in the 13th Congress that has already ceased to exist. Thus, they said, it was no longer in effect.

Justice Teresita Dy-Liacco Flores, the second division's ponente in Bolante's habeas corpus case, said the court should at least hear the Senate if it is to order the chamber to withdraw Bolante's guards.

Flores said ruling on the validity of Senate's arrest order is proving to be difficult since the chamber isn't a respondent in the petition. Only the Senate sergeant-at-arms, retired Maj. Gen. Jose Balagtada, was named respondent.

The Senate sergeant-at-arms was the one that took Bolante into custody following his deportation from the United States.

"Now, for the court to order these two custodians to be relieved... frankly, the court will encroach on the authority of the Senate," Flores said in open court.

"It will encroach on the authority of a party which is not made a respondent," she added.

Lawyer Dennis Arroyo, counsel of Bolante's son, asked the court to temporarily relieve the alleged architect of the P728-million fertilizer fund scam of his two Senate guards pending the filing of the memoranda and the court deliberation.

Besides, Arroyo argued, Senate legal counsel David Yap has already admitted in his pleading that the Senate has already released Bolante from custody.

"The subject [of the writ petition] is even willing to post a bond," Arroyo said in open court after conferring with Bolante's own counsel, Antonio Zabarte.

Flores, however, said that while the Senate lawyer was already saying Bolante is free to come and go as he pleases albeit with Senate escorts, "is it harping on protective custody."

Yap had told the court that guards were only countering their duty to escort Bolante to protect him from any harm.

"For this court to order the Senate... at least the Senate should be here," Flores said.

Arroyo said that they didn't include the Senate as a respondent since then Senate President Manuel Villar's order to Balagtada to effect the 13th Senate's order of arrest on Bolante was only a "precedence."

He said it wasn't even a formal press release.

"It was only verbal," Arroyo told reporters after the hearing.

"In filing a case, kind pasok 'yung tawag," he added.

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YULETIDE BONANZA

Big jackpot for Super Lotto

By Julie M. Aurelio

A YULETIDE BONANZA AWAITS THE winner of Sunday night's 6/49 Super Lotto draw which the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office announces will have a jackpot of P133-million.

PCSO spokesperson Dr. Larry Cedro said yesterday the office was looking forward to a jump in ticket sales over the weekend to make the prize even higher.

"That estimate of P112 million is P133 million is very conservative. We are confident that this weekend's jackpot will be bigger than what we are expecting," he told the Inquirer.

No one was able to get the winning six-number combination drawn on Thursday night of 25-34-46-08-29-47, which would have won P102,322,762, the fifth time this year that the prize has gone over the P100-million mark.

The 6/49 prize reached P112.2 million on Jan. 17; P106.6 million on March 2; P108.8 million on May 18, and P137 million on Dec. 8.

Cedro said sales were expected to last boon this weekend, are just because of the suspenders put on sale, but also because of the upcoming Christmas season.

"Aside from the fact that the public has a big team in the game, it is also Christmas. The bettors have their own dreams of winning the big prize for the holidays," he said.

He noted that the betting public's interest in the lotto game usually became keener as the stake topped the hundred-million mark.

"We noticed that as the prize goes higher, people take more chances in betting because they are excited. The game is spiced up by the fact that no one is winning yet," Cedro said.

On draw day Thursday, sales reached a single-draw high of P97,215,320.

The biggest prize ever of the 6/49 Super Lotto draw was P340 million, posted in April this year and won by a construction worker from Novaliches in Quezon City.

In June, a computer programmer from Marong Bacoor, and a medical secretary from Cebu City shared the P157-million prize, the second biggest jackpot.

Last month, a lucky bettor from Davao City took home the P131,367,521.60 prize.

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Beater of Pinay barred from RP

DECLARING THAT NPC DEATERS HAVE no place in the Philippines, the Bureau of Immigration has blacklisted a British national for allegedly maltreating and abusing his Filipina wife.

"We take deterrent Filipino hospitality if he is a wife beater, more so if the victim is a Filipina," said Immigration Commissioner Marcelo Libanan. In a press statement, Libanan said he had ordered the inclusion of John Paul Wardindale, 32, on the bureau's blacklist at the request of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Libanan said the DFA made the request after the Philippine Embassy in London informed the department about a complaint that Wardindale's Filipino wife filed against him.

Edgardo Espiritu, Philippine Ambassador to the Court of St. James', suggested in his report that Wardindale be barred from entering the country to prevent him from subjecting other Filipino women to physical and verbal abuse.

The ambassador furnished the DFA a copy of a letter from the Berkshire Women's Aid (BWA), the women's group in Great Britain, detailing the ordeal the victim suffered at the hands of her estranged husband.

BWA quoted the victim's narrative on how her husband subjected her to physical and emotional abuse, harassment and other acts of domestic violence on several occasions early this year.

The school that owns after they separated, Wardindale continued to harass and threaten her through voice mails and text messages.

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for SY 2009-2010

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Below passers will be advised and notified through e-mail, telephone, or text message on the succeeding screening procedures. For the complete list including those in wait list, please visit our website www.nma.edu.ph or contact the Office of the Registrar at 049-5400013 or 30

Correction

IN THE NOV 27 ISSUE, a photo caption on Page A17 mistakenly identified the woman in the photo as the Mangyan worker Liboan "Badong" Isidro. Isidro was not at the rally but at the Mirasol stand where the Iloilo Peace and Security Assembly was simultaneously held.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors or writing to the Ombud, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mercedes Jacinto, Makati City, Fax Nos. 897-4737/897-4738, e-mail address: ombud@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity might be sent to the individual concerned at: Jose_Bonifacio@inquirer.com.ph or the Metro_desk@inquirer.com.ph. The publisher can also be contacted at 897-1808 Local 306.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Saturday, November 29, 2008
34th Week in Ordinary Time
1st Reading: Rev 22:1-7
Gospel: Lk 21:34-36

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be on your guard, lest our come hearts be weighed down with a life of pleasure, drunkenness and worldly cares, lest that day catch you suddenly as a trap. For it will come upon all the inhabitants of the whole earth. But watch at all times and pray, that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen and to stand before the Son of Man."

Commentary

Vigilance means keeping watch, and doing so with the same fidelity as soldiers of the guard. We are called to stand guard against the threats of our contemporary culture and to maintain a keen lookout for the dangers that lurk about.

We are called to vigilance, for the Lord expects us to be ready to act as those called to shepherd. Rather, the Lord maintains a steadfast vigil for His flock, caring as it does for our full access to the saving. Still, may we remain sober and alert so that we are not taken in by the evil influences of this age.

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HUMAN RIGHTS Commission chair Loïs de Lima visits the arrested farmers at the Quezon City jail. Later in the day the farmers were released. INQ/LYN RIVA

Farmers freed from QC jail

By Nancy C. Carvajal

NINE FARMERS FROM NEGROS Occidental held on charges of illegal assembly and disobedience to a person of authority were ordered released by Quezon City Assistant Prosecutor Ferdinand Reyloso yesterday on bail bond, pending trial.

Karl Marx Cariaño, lawyer of the farmers, told the Inquirer that the charges against the farmers had been dismissed for further investigation. "Only nine of the 28 farmers who picketed the Land Regulation Authority were charged," he said.

In the resolution ordering the release, Reyloso said, "There was no indication that any of those who attended the meeting/rally was armed, and that the assembly was for the purpose of committing an illegal act."

He said that more evidence was needed to show that the farmers willfully disobeyed or resisted a given order by a person in authority.

The farmers were arrested on Thursday morning after they entered the premises of the LRA on East Avenue, Quezon City.

They were protesting the refusal of the LRA to register 137 hectares of land of the Hacienda Nicasia, owned by the family of the President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, in Hacienda Gotozobras, Isabela, Negros Occidental.

Quezon City police dragged the farmers out of the premises and detained them at the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) police station 10 on Tinker corner Kamuning.

Earlier, Commission on Human Rights Chair Leila De Lima, in visiting the farmers, asked them why they had to enter the LRA premises to demonstrate their protest.

The farmers told the agency was not paying any attention to their grievances. They also said they were scheduled to dialogue with LRA Administrator Benedicto Ildefonso Diaz, but that the dialogue did not materialize.

They also denied that they became unruly inside the LRA offices.

Cariaño said the farmers were back in a picket in front of the office of the Department of Agrarian Reform and planned to continue their protest on Monday.

Rogelio Soles, 58, one of those released, said he would continue to join his companions and not go home to his province.

"To say at this life I never thought of being thrown into jail. Now that I experienced it, I intend to continue our fight for our cause," Soles said. With reports from Alexis Romero

MAGDALO TRIAL

Soldiers think Honasan can get them off the hook

By Miko Morales

SOLDIERS BEING TRIED ON CHARGES OF coup d'etat as a Makati court have asked anew that Sen. Gregorio Honasan be subpoenaed, arguing that his testimony would further bolster their claim that the so-called Oakwood mutiny in 2003 was a "mere airing of grievances."

In a motion for partial reconsideration, Ernesto Francisco, lawyer for the soldiers, said the senator could explain what "national recovery program" was all about, being its author.

"The accused cannot be faulted for insisting to call Senator Honasan to the witness stand, in support of their defense that the National Recovery Program is nothing but a platform of government or agenda for reforms and that what took place in Oakwood was certainly ... a mere airing of grievances," they said.

Junior military officers stormed and seized control of the Oakwood Hotel in Ayala Center in Makati City in February 2003, laying siege to the area and parking troops carrying long firearms. The soldiers expressed disgust at the way the government was being run and offered the national recovery program as the solution.

Francisco said Honasan's testimony would be material for the cause of the accused, saying that the senator described the national recovery program in his 2005 resolution/bill/act as the "embodiment of legislative acts in Congress."

In an earlier resolution, Judge Oscar Pi-

HONASAN

carried of Makati RTC branch 148 ruled that Honasan could not be forced to testify for or against his coaccused "unless he voluntarily consents to testify in favor or against" the defendants.

The court said Francisco had manifested to the court in an earlier hearing that Honasan would not testify for or against the accused in the case.

But Francisco argued that since the senator "is no longer a 'coaccused' in the case" after the court ordered the withdrawal of the coup d'etat case against Honasan, he could now be compelled to testify in the trial.

"In this situation where Senator Honasan appears to be unwilling to testify, the accused also have the right to seek a compulsory process from the Honorable Court," the lawyer said.

Task force on bus burning formed

By Alexis Romero

POLICE IN REGION 1 FORMED YESTERDAY "Task Force Victory" to go after suspects involved in the burning of the Victory Liner bus in Lingayen, Pangasinan Thursday.

Region 1 police commander Chief Supt. Lutero Tiroana designated Senior Supt. Percival Barbo, Dagupan police chief, to head the Task Force.

In a statement, Tiroana said the task force will conduct an in-depth investigation of the incident and go after the perpetrators.

"I have ordered the investigating body to look into all possible motives such as inter-bus wars, extortion, disgruntled employees, and robbery," Tiroana said.

He also pointed out that tracker teams from the Lingayen Police Station, Pangasinan police provincial office, the Regional Mobile Group, the region's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) and other police stations are conducting parallel operations for the immediate arrest of the perpetrators.

"I directed all unit commanders and chiefs of police of Region 1 to conduct a threat assessment and institute target hardening measures in all bus company terminals within their area of responsibility to pre-empt further occurrence of incidents of this nature," Tiroana stressed.

He also said that the management of Victory Liner Bus Company has expressed willingness to install closed-circuit televisions in all their bus terminals in the region.

Early Thursday, the Victory Liner air-conditioned buses were bombed by unusual 20 armed men at the company's terminal on Avenida Street.

Before the incident, Lingayen police received armed men on the same street, presumably the suspects in the bus burning. The encounter resulted in injuries to six policemen.

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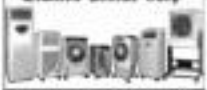

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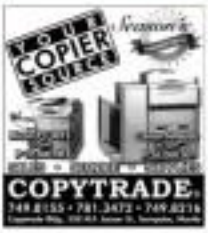

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Thousands of travellers stranded in Thailand

By Neil Adlai O. Velasco
(Editor's Note: The writer is an Inquirer deployment who is currently detained with other Asian News Network office in Bangkok.)

BANGKOK—THOUSANDS OF travelers remain stranded in Thailand after four more of seven international airports, disrupted reports nearly tens of billions of dollars a day and installed the kingdom's image as the "land of smiles."

The Thai Ministry of Tourism called a crisis meeting Friday attended by the airport officials and representatives from 50 airlines to try to map out a strategy for getting people in and out of the kingdom.

Airlines yesterday struggled to get even a handful of passengers out of the Utapao naval base, about 150 kilometers southeast of Bangkok, as more than 100,000 travelers from 50 countries were stuck in Suvarnabhumi, the international airport, one bustle 700 flights every day.

"The travelers had better seats at their hotels for further information because Utapao airport cannot cope with a large number of people," he said.

Weerasak said 7,000 travellers were stuck at Suvarnabhumi when it was raided last Wednesday, more than double the figure given by airport authorities in the video.

They were taken to hotels on Wednesday, and are among the tens of thousands of travellers trying to get out of the kingdom.

Emergency centers

Protesters late Wednesday almost succeeded the smaller Don Muang airport, forcing its closure on Thursday.

Weerasak said the government would be setting up emergency centers to help the estimated 50,000 passengers who have missed flights since protesters shut down Bangkok's airports.

He said the ministry would open information centers at four Bangkok hotels "in the next 48 to 72 hours," where airlines could set up desks and travelers could reschedule flights, get new tickets and check in.

He said that immigration authorities had also agreed to extend the visas of all foreign tourists trapped and people will not face the usual fines if they overstay their visas.

As of yesterday, the total number of Filipinos stranded in Bangkok was reached more than 1,300 after two Philippine airlines canceled their flights scheduled to depart yesterday.

Philippine Airlines canceled its two flights bound for Manila yesterday, stranding 400 more passengers in Bangkok.

Canceled till Dec. 3

Cebu Pacific Air also canceled its flights to Manila-bound flights yesterday, affecting 179 passengers, and another flight scheduled for tomorrow with 131 passengers.

Believing the airline decided to extend the cancellation of all flights to and from Bangkok until Dec. 3, all reservation offices have been ordered to stop selling tickets for the Manila-Bangkok-Manila and Cebu-Bangkok-Cebu routes during this period.

With around Filipinos booked on other airlines like Thai Airways International, the number of stranded Filipinos in Bangkok could be much higher.

Ambassador Romyniemas, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)-Deputy governor for marketing communication, said the Thai government would shoulder food and hotel accommodation for stranded travelers until the airport reopens.

The TAT has allocated a Bt2,000 (P2,750) daily budget for each stranded passenger. Ambassador said. He said those stranded tourists need only to present their passports and their plane tickets in avail of the assistance, but the cash will not be given directly to the passengers, she said.

As of yesterday, 426 Filipinos (not counted of the assistance through the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok and are now billeted in different hotels in the Thai capital.

Philippine ambassador to Bangkok Antonio Rodrigues said the Bt42,000 assistance was more than enough for the needs of the stranded Filipinos.

"Without the assistance, it would be a big problem for the embassy," Rodrigues said in a phone interview.

The embassy has a stand-by fund of $10,000 which it can use in emergency cases such as this, but the amount was not immediately earmarked as of yesterday.

Rodrigues said that so far the embassy has not received any request for monetary assistance from any stranded Filipino. "They just seek our assistance to help them book hotels since they had already checked out," he said.

At the airport cities located to four to five centers, airlines have are getting more calls from frantic and irate passengers demanding to leave Bangkok immediately due to consciousness

Stay put

They have also been advised against flying to Manila by way of Kuala Lumpur because the route entails land travel through Thailand's restive south. They should stay put in Bangkok, he said.

"Once we resume flights, we will contact them. They should keep away from potential trouble. They are not restricted where they want to go, but they should avoid areas of demonstrations," Cristobal said. With Kristine L. Alave, Nina T. Calvelo and Reuters

Noli on term extension: The people will take it badly

From page A1

OH CASTRO: Seriously considering Lakas proposal

Sen. Manuel Villar and Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando also opposed possible term extensions and delayed elections in the course of amending the 1987 Constitution.

"At this point, [post-poning the elections is] the least that we want to happen because of the impending recession and all the things that are happening worldwide," Fernando said.

The idea, including term extensions, is not "tough sailing," according to Fernando, the first public official to declare his intention to seek the presidency in 2010.

Villar, speaking in reporters on the same Makati affair, said: "Term it's simple: Let's just proceed with the 2010 elections."

Tops in the survey

Dr. Castro and Villar joined former President Joseph Estrada at the top of the last Pulse Asia survey of leading presidential candidates in 2008.

The Vice President garnered 18 percent and the senator 17 percent in the October 2008 Ulat ng Bayan survey. Also leading in the list was Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile (15 percent) and Luzon Legarda (13 percent).

Villar, who lost the Senate presidency in a coup last week, said that given the "quickness" with which the administration-dominated House killed the latest impeachment complaint against 9th Ombudsman, "it's really possible that the move for Charter change will prosper" in the chamber.

De Castro said he considered as "serious" the invitation by members of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats to be the party's standard-bearer in 2010.

Also being considered for the post is Fernando, who again declared: "I am running in 2010."

House resolutions

Committee Sec. Rep. Luis Villafuerte, president of Mr. Arroyo's party Lakas-Kampi ng Mabuhay Pilipinas, is circulating a resolution in the House seeking to convene Congress into a constituent assembly, voting jointly to propose changes in the Constitution.

Among its leading proponents is Mr. Arroyo's eldest child, Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo.

Villafuerte's resolution earns parallel to one filed much earlier by Batangas Rep. Hermilando Mandanas, which seeks to extend by one year the term of all elected officials except for those at the barangay level.

Mandanas' House Resolution No. 1508 states: "All elected officials whose term will end at noon on June 30, 2010, shall hereby hold office until noon of June 30, 2011."

Lanao Sur Congressman, who opposed Dr. Mandanas resolution only this week, said in recent statements would be a prolonged stay of Mr. Arroyo, already the Philippines' longest-serving president after her late election Ferdinand Marcos. If a Union Rep. Heinz Ortega, chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments, claimed that HR 1508 had earlier been withdrawn.)

The people's mandate

But according to Rosario Macalintal, who has served as Mr. Arroyo's election lawyer, amending the Constitution to extend the term of the President or any other elected official is "not legally feasible."

Citing a Supreme Court decision in 1997, Macalintal quoted then Chief Justice Antonio Nachuran as saying that elected leaders "can legally and morally justify their stays only by obtaining the voluntary consent of the electorate."

Thus, the powers to extend an official's stay in office law not in Congress but in the people, Macalintal said.

He added: "Congress has no power to extend such a term because it will be tantamount to lengthening governance without the mandate of the people.

"Hence, any move to amend the Charter by extending the term by a law will be a usurping power and to lengthen governance without a mandate of the governed."

Writing on the wall

Even Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, an ally of the President who was instrumental in the dismissal of the fourth impeachment complaint against her, warned his colleagues to "read the writing on the wall against pursuing constitutional change now."

He called on Mr. Arroyo to stop the campaign for Charter change that, he said, was "headed for a dead end."

"Any proposal for a constitutional amendment in 2009 is one lane in the day and will only engender grave suspicions on a hidden agenda and provoke incoherently divisive popular opposition," Lagman said in a statement.

He said lawmakers should be aware of the limits of power and should stop eying the people's calendars.

Lagman also said he had consulted his constituents and found that they did not approve of Charter change because it was simply a self-serving goal.

No to Con-ass, Cha-cha

He said he himself framed amending the Constitution only after 2010.

In an interview, Lagman said he had refused a request to sign the Villafuerte resolution and would not sign Speaker Prospero Nograles' resolution seeking amendments to the economic provisions in the Charter.

Lagman said he would likewise not sign HR 1508, filed by representatives of Bayan Muna and of various political parties and enjoying all moves to amend the Constitution before 2010.

He said affixing his signature to it would be unnecessary because his position against Charter change now was already "categorical." With reports from Kristine L. Alave and Lelia B. Salaverria

Big 3, other oil firms cut ...

From page A1

Phil. Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. started its midnight last night.

Seaoil, which alone reduced the price of diesel by P2 a liter on Tuesday, said it was not making any changes to the product's price at this time.

According to the Department of Energy, the seven-week sweeping prices of gasoline and diesel were lower by $8 and $4 per barrel, respectively.

"Gasoline, which has been posting lower than Dubai [crude] this month, already dropped by about 72 percent since July," the DOE said in a statement.

The move was a rise of diesel prices which plunged 62 percent from peak levels, following a report from the US Department of Energy that fuel demand across the United States had dropped sharply.

First time in 35 years

The London-based Centre for Global Energy Studies sees a major cutback in global demand for fuel for the first time in 25 years amid the severe global economic slowdown.

Today's price cut brought prevailing pump rates in Metro Manila of unleaded gasoline to a range of between P39.37 and P36.15 a liter, diesel between P33.47 and P4.150 a liter, and kerosene between P30.15 and P31.25 a liter.

Before the latest series of the regional benchmark Dubai crude averaged $50 per barrel in Nov. 1 to Nov. 26 trading.

This shows a decrease of $17 per barrel from the October average of $67 and from the June average of $95.27 since Dubai prices peaked at an average $130.17 in July.

As of Nov. 26, the price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore benchmark for refined petroleum products fell to $49 per barrel, or $31 lower than the October average of $80.

The average MOPS-based price for diesel in the same trading period was pegged at $74 per barrel, or $13 lower than the October average of $89.

The average MOPS prices for diesel have gone down by 39% to per barrel since the peak of $110.36 in June.

PDI man tops Burgos biotech journalism award

From page A1

JOSE G. BURGOS JR. FOR BIOTECH JOURNALISM AWARDS Named after the iconic journalist turned farmer, the award's first prize went to Inquirer Central Luzon correspondent Rondina Reyes (3rd from left). To his left are Agriculture Undersecretary Segfredo Serrano and Edita Burgos and to his right...Across: the Malaya editor Jun Bautista and Dr. William Padolina. (PHOTO BY NOEL PABALATE)

the proposal of Filipino-American scientist Dr. Florelle Aberon to produce an alternative fuel by extracting "tuman fluid" from cowhose and using it to ferment biomass materials like corn stubble and straw.

Barnam fluid is the "number liquor" which can convert plant molecules called lignocellulose into carbohydrates, which can be turned into bioethanol through fermentation.

Held annually since 2001, the Jose G. Burgos Jr. Awards recognize journalists who, like the late press freedom fighter, promote biotechnology in the Philippines through scientific reports.

Biotechnology is the use of living things, especially cells and bacteria, in industrial processes.

Helping farmers

"Dear Burgos Jr.(correspondent) the awards will help more reporters in scientific reporting. We believed in Rondy as a means of helping farmers improve their lives," said Burgos' widow, Edita Burgos, who is the executive director of the Biotech Media and Information Resource Center (BMARC).

The awards capped the National Biotechnology Week organized by BMARC, a group of science, agriculture and media-related government and nongovernment agencies.

The award ceremonies were held Thursday at the Institute for Biotechnology Industries at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

Surprise

Burgos, who was informed by phone that he was a finalist, traveled all the way from Nueva Ecija, accompanied by his family. He learned he won first prize only when he arrived at the event.

"It was a surprise. I didn't even know about this [contest]. I thought I wouldn't win and that my trip might not be worth it," Burgos said in Filipino.

Burgos, who has been writing for the Inquirer since 1986, holds a Ph.D. in Development Education from the Central Luzon State University. After retiring as a professor, he concentrated on writing, and started tending his own farm.

Agriculture is one of his advocacies, he said. He has received awards from various institutions for his articles, including the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

He published features in the business section from farmers getting access to the Internet to new role-games.

Media as link

"We are an agricultural country. Agriculture is our life. Without it, we will fall as a country," he said.

As the awards ceremonies, Burgos thanked the Inquirer and Filipino readers for giving due notice "not only to controversial stories but also to developmental ones."

"Media provides the link between the scientists and the users. They are able to popularize technology and findings and make farmers understand—that's a big help," said Edita Burgos.

DOST Secretary Estrella Alabastro lauded the winners for being "champions of scientific inquiry."

She noted that biotech reporting had gone a long way since its infancy in stories on animal projects, like cloned provincial awardees, like Burgos, for helping farmers to be empowered nationwide.

Other winners

Edita added: "We believe that if biotech were accepted [wholeheartedly] by farmers, and if they have an informed choice, we can usher in food security. It can also improve economic conditions."

Coming in second in the biotech Burgos was Philippine Star's Gerson Ng, while Pampanga Urban Center of Biotechnology editor Cheryl N. Arid Otanio won P20,000 and P10,000, respectively.

Another business reporter, Tessa Salazar, was recognized as a finalist for her stories "SP was may hold key to cancer cure" and "U.MIT awakens eye to mangrove for fuel."

The Department of Biotechnology placed first in the Best News Story category.

Manila Bulletin landed first place in the Institutional Category for the most number of biotech stories published, with reporter Melody Aguilar achieving Hall of Fame status for placing first for the past three years.

Jayson T. Daniel

Secrecy law bars senators from Bolante accounts

By Christine O. Avendaño

THE BANK SECRECY LAW PREvented senators yesterday from getting the real score about the controversial bank accounts said to be maintained by former Agriculture Undersecretary Jocelyn "Joc-Joc" Bolante, alleged to be the token channel for the P728-million fertilizer fund scam.

The managers of three banks where Bolante admitted he had accounts with, reportedly involved Republic Act No. 1405 or the Bank Secrecy Law, in refusing to reply to Senate President Juggy Estrada's queries at the investigation of the alleged conspiracy into the fertilizer fund scam.

At the last hearing on Nov. 25, Bolante admitted he had bank accounts in Urbanbank, Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) and Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC).

Catherine Briones, manager of the RCBC branch in Legaspi Village, could only confirm that Bolante had two accounts. In refusing the bank secrecy law, she refused to say when they were opened, how much money were in the accounts, and how many of the accounts were now inactive.

Grace Lazaro, manager of BPI Legaspi branch, invoked the same law and told Estrada she could neither confirm nor deny whether Bolante had bank accounts with them.

Pointing out that Bautista already told the committee that Bolante had two bank accounts with them, Estrada asked Lazaro to do the same but she declined.

Estrada turned to Bolante and asked how many bank accounts he had with BPI. Bolante said he probably had four bank accounts.

Estrada then asked the BPI manager to confirm Bolante's reply.

Lazaro said the law requires banks to disclose details about someone's account if it has written permission from the client.

"I don't think there's a need for a written letter coming from Mr. Bolante because he had already admitted under oath that he maintained a bank account in your branch. Why can't you confirm it?" Estrada asked Lazaro, who again invoked the provision requiring the need for written permission from Bolante.

At one point, Estrada threatened to cite the bank manager for contempt. Lazaro later admitted that Bolante had accounts, not with her branch, but with another branch "based on [bank] records."

Bolante said his bank accounts had been frozen because of alleged illegal transactions at the Live Cor position in connection with the P728 million fertilizer fund scam.

He said he was charged merely for the corporation but only until 2001.

Sen. Rodolfo Lawson saw nothing to get Bolante to admit he had one or acting chair of Live Corp., on three occasions when then Agriculture Secretary Leonardo Montemayor did not attend meetings.

BOLANTE at yesterday's hearing: He without authorization, no disclosure.

AFP chief tells soldiers to be loyal

THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMED Forces held an inspection parade at military bases in Metro Manila yesterday, urging soldiers to remain loyal to President Macapagal-Arroyo amid renewed calls for mass protests.

"Let us not be distracted by issues and political events that's happening around us," Gen. Alexander Yano told soldiers lined up at Fort Bonifacio with armored vehicles behind them.

Opposition politicians and Catholic bishops have called for demonstrations, initiated by a proposal by Ms Arroyo's supporters to change the Constitution and extend her six-year term beyond 2010.

"If we can no longer go through the legal means of seeking the truth, we will be forced to use extraconstitutional or even illegal means," Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez told a forum on Thursday urging the people to take to the streets.

Another bishop, Antonio Tobias said he will lead a protest rally tomorrow against efforts to change the country's Constitution that would remove term limits on elected officials, including president.

Mr Arroyo's administration has been rocked by at least three coup plots and four impeachment bids due to long-running corruption allegations and doubts on the credibility of her 2004 presidency.

While there is deep opposition, she has held on to power because the jaded middle class is sick of political instability and she has a huge majority in the House of Representatives.

Yano also said the country faced a security threat, especially from the Islamic militant group Abu Sayyaf with suspected ties to Jemaah Islamiyah. *Reuters*

UAE to observe Nat'l Day Dec. 2

THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE) IS TO celebrate its 37th National Day on Dec. 2 with ceremonies following a year of steady progress at home and the emergence of an international economic crisis that poses major challenges for continued growth in the petro-dotted Gulf.

"The nation's development has been fuelled to a large extent by the UAE's ample resources of hydrocarbons, with the fourth largest oil and the fifth largest proven gas reserves in the world," the UAE Embassy said in a press statement. "The nation's founder, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, had the vision to devote oil and gas revenues to development, not just of the infrastructure but also of the country's people."

Led by President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Vice President and Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the UAE's inhabitants today enjoy access to modern housing, health care, education and other services while the UAE has emerged, thanks to its economic policies and reforms, as a major commercial and financial trading hub for the entire region.

Also in holiday-bent the UAE's spectacular progress are millions of expatriates, including substantial overseas workers, a substantial portion of whom are Filipinos. From less than half a million in 1971, the country's population has increased to nearly four million, today. Much of the increase came from expatriates who have flocked to the country to take part in its economic growth and to benefit from the employment and other opportunities. Today, around four-fifths of the populations are expatriates from over 150 other countries around the world, the embassy said.

The big the recent global boom in construction and development held in Makati City the UAE minister of labor, Saqr Ghobash, proposed a pilot project to survey and document best practices in the management of overseas contractual workers in Arab states to improve their qualities of life and working conditions.

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The Philippine College of Surgeons, with the tradition of excellence, holds its 64th Annual Clinical Congress with the theme, **"Traditions and Technologies in Surgery."** The Congress schedule on the week of December 7 to 10, 2008 at the EDSA Shangri-la Hotel, Mandaluyong City will highlight the current standards of practice in Surgery. More than 20 invited international and local experts will deliver plenary lectures on various topics ranging from surgical education, trauma care, patient safety in surgery, minimally invasive surgery and surgical oncology. Timely lectures on surgical specialty sessions are likewise scheduled to tackle this issues.

A well-known Filipino hero-pilot, Mr. Antonio B. Ocampo will deliver the Gregorio T. Singian Lecture, "Finding the Winged Dragon: Head and Science" during the opening ceremonies on December 7, 2008. The G.T. Singian Lecture is held every year to honor one of the founders and the first president of the Philippine College of Surgeons, Dr. Gregorio T. Singian.

The PCS was founded in September 11, 1936 by a group of 35 surgeons at the Hospital de San Juan de Dios in Intramuros, Manila led by Dr. G.T. Singian. Today the PCS has grown to 11 chapters representing different regions of the country with membership totaling more than 1,000 fellows from 21 different surgical societies.

With an array of scientific and social activities lined up for the Congress, this meeting promises to be both educational and entertaining. A Fellowship night of fun and entertainment is scheduled on December 7 at 7pm with the New Minstrels as the main attractions. The participation of the PCS chapters will definitely add spice to this fun-filled evening.

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'Attackers showed no remorse'

MUMBAI—AN INDIAN MARINE COMMANDo who battled Islamic militants overnight in a Mumbai hotel said on Friday the guerrillas showed no remorse and fired at anyone who moved.

"They were the kind of people with no remorse—anybody and whomsoever came in front of them they fired," the unidentified commando, who belonged to India's coast Marine Commando Force known as Marcos, told reporters.

"We could have got those terrorists but for so many hotel guests," he said.

"The bodies were lying rotten here and there. There was blood all over and in my leg to avoid the casualty of those civilians, we had to be that much more careful," he said.

Shots in the dark

The account was the first of the fighting given by a members of the elite operations unit.

"When an exchange of fire takes place in darkness and there are bodies strewn all over, and blood all over, you're actually not looking who is injured or killed. You're just looking for terrorists with lots of weapons on him," he said.

He said the commandos had been hampered by not knowing the layout of the 600 rooms in the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower hotel, one of the hotels attacked by the militants, and the exchanges of fire had taken place in the darkness.

He said that he had seen "13 cold bodies" in one location.

"The guerrillas would have avoided training to fire the weapon they used," he said. "Definitely it appears not everybody can fire this AK series of weapons." he said just minutes before heavy firing again erupted outside the Taj hotel.

Surreal experience

A retired Australian judge caught up in the militant attacks described on Friday the surreal experience of seeing bloody action at the Taj.

David Gaynor, who was in his room at the landmark hotel when it was attacked, said he was led downstairs to safety by armed soldiers who had got into his room, breaking the door off its hinges.

"Down on the bottom (floor) there was blood all over the floor and lots of bodies," he told Fairfax Radio Network.

"Outside in the foyer of this beautiful hotel it was just like a big mess all the more." Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said as many as 20 Australians could still be trapped inside the Taj Hotel and Oberoi hotels, which were targeted in the assault aimed at hits by gunmen from Pakistan.

Indian commandos have rescued more guests from the Oberoi but several members of a New South Wales state trade delegation are believed to remain trapped inside.

Australian Asia Flight Training said its delegation to the 12-person team had not left his room more than minutes began. "He's not impressed. He's still in his room and he's been told to stay (room is fragrance)," a spokesperson told national news agency AAP.

Family photo offers calm

"He's had nothing. He had two cans soda for dinner for most of the time," the spokesperson said.

Another member of the delegation, Gerrit Harrison, said he was looking at pictures of his young family to remain calm ahead of his rescue.

"They have created different levels in the hotel and managed to get some people out, but not all of us," Harrison told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. "Frustratingly enough, for about the last six hours I've been told: 'Yes, you're out soon, you're out soon, you're out soon.' And I've still been.

"But I understand the situation that people don't want to go anywhere until [the militants] are smothered."

Another delegate, Debra Bayers, has reportedly been in touch with her daughter via mobile phone SMS text message because she did not want to draw the attention of the militants by speaking on the phone. AFP

CARRIED TO SAFETY Elite Indian commandos rescue and escort guests out of the Taj Mahal hotel after fighting militants overnight in the Islamic militants' inside the luxury hotel. REUTERS

150 de

Thai PM opts to stay 'indefinitely' in Chiang Mai

BANGKOK—THAI PRIME MINISTER Somchai Wongsawat will remain in the northern city of Chiang Mai "indefinitely" because of tensions with the military, a government spokesman said.

Somchai was forced to land in Chiang Mai from a trip abroad on Wednesday after antigovernment protesters seized control of Bangkok's two airports.

He declared a state of emergency at the airports on Thursday night as rumors of a possible military coup swept the capital, although the Army said it was not intervening.

The siege in Suvarnbhumi and Don Mueang airports have cut the Thai capital's air links to the world, leaving thousands stranded and fueling the Thai economy.

Reluctant security forces

But security forces have been reluctant to clear the airport facilities of protesters who have vowed to stay put until the government falls.

As there are still uncertainties in the relations between the government and Army for the time, the prime minister will stay in Chiang Mai," government spokesperson Jurapol Thitchumnon told Agence France-Presse.

"He has no schedule to return to Bangkok, he will stay in Chiang Mai under orders for his security," Supoot said.

Rumors of the Army preparing to launch what would be Thailand's 19th coup or attempted coup in 76 years of social democracy continue to swirl around the capital.

But Army chief Anupong Paochinda, who suggested that Somchai should quit this week and call for elections, has insisted that he would not order a coup.

Thaksin's hometown

Cabinet ministers flew to Chiang Mai for an urgent meeting on Thursday, effectively setting up a government in exile from the capital, which remains cut off by air from the rest of the world.

Chiang Mai is a progovernment stronghold and the hometown of the ousted former Premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who is accused by protesters of being the puppet master behind the current elected government.

Thousands of supporters of Thaksin were ousted in a military coup in 2006 after similar protests led by the People's Alliance for Democracy, a loose group comprising the old Bangkok-based elite and elements of the Police and military.

"From now on officials will not disclose the prime minister's daily schedule to the media. He will coordinate with ministers by telephone," Supoot said.

Reporters in Chiang Mai said no one had seen Somchai on Friday morning, even at his residence in the city. AFP

Thai protesters agree to hold talks with gov't

night and ordered the facilities cleared of protesters but security forces feared a raid would spark a bloody confrontation.

Leaders of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), which have refused to end their siege of the Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang airports, agreed to talks to ascertain if officials and police that the martial overseers had been conducted overthe weekend.

The talks would involve the governor of Samut Prakan province where Suvarnabhumi is located, a representative of Airports of Thailand, the chairman of the National Human Rights Commission and the media.

'Fight to the death'

A PAD leader earlier said that demonstrators would "fight to the death" against any attempt to evict them from either airport.

The protesters are calling for the resignation of the government elected in December's election, which is thought to be for the new Premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in a coup in 2006.

Thailand's powerful Army chief on Wednesday urged feuding to dissolve parliament and hold fresh elections but the premier refused, deepening fears of a bloody end to the airport siege.

Analysts began to see Bangkok an unsafe to eat from a naval base yesterday, but tens of thousands of passengers are believed to have missed flights after four days of unrest that have badly hit Thailand's tourist industry. (Surveillance story, Page A8.)

The protesters booked for an assault over night on the airports, cornering more new curfew to about three kilometers around the flagship Suvarnabhumi international airport and blocking access roads, unnerved said.

"We are not afraid. We will fight to the death), we will not surrender and we are ready," one of the women protest leaders, Somsak Kosaisuk, told a crowd of supporters at Don Mueang.

Police say around 4,000 protesters from the PAD—a movement backed by elements of the Palace, the media and Thailand's Bangkok-based elite—are occupying the international airport in Bangkok.

Another 1,500 are at Don Mueang, where the Cabinet's temporary offices have been located since protesters seized their headquarters at Government House in Bangkok in August, calling for the government to resign.

The airport blockades are the latest

tactic in the PAD's six-month campaign to unseat an elected government it accuses of being a puppet of Thaksin.

Somchai, Thaksin's brother-in-law, has refused to step down, portraying himself as a democratically elected leader who has been constrained, intensifying concerns about the unpredictable economy's ability to cope with a global recession.

Somchai's attempts to assert his authority by declaring emergency rule and unleashing action to clear the airports were opposed by the military and by the police commissioner of Bangkok who met the protesters.

Gentle way

"We will use the gentle way first. The priority is to negotiate and not crack down (unarmed) police—we are still Thais," said Piya Uay-arayakul, Bangkok's police commissioner, in the aftermath of the national police chief, police Gen. Sirichai Wongpaiwan.

The statement did not give a reason for the dismissal, saying only that the country's top policeman had been "ordered ... to move to the prime minister's office."

Police Maj. Gen. Patcharapol Tangsuwat, the airport's regional, has been appointed acting national police chief.

The Army has already said it is opposed to the use of force against the protesters, making tensions between the government and the military in a nation that has seen 18 coups since the end of absolute monarchy in 1932.

The PAD has vowed not to quit until Somchai resigns, alleging that its ends his, called former Premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in a 2006 coup, is the puppet master behind the government elected in December.

The military denied rumors on Thursday that it was planning to launch a new coup, following reports that Somchai was about to sack the powerful Army chief Anupong Paochinda for calling for the dissolution of the government and holding new elections.

There were further signs of the civilian-military rift, government spokesperson Jurapol Thitchumnon said Somchai would remain in Chiang Mai "indefinitely ... for his safety". (See related story on this page.)

Possible scenarios

The following scenarios examine what might happen next:

Negotiate a way out. Police begin talks with PAD leaders yesterday to try to end the 48-day peacefully. Whether the PAD will take these negotiations seriously is doubtful.

They leaders have said previously that

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ead, 370 wounded

5 Israeli bostages killed

THE BODIES OF FIVE ISRAELI hostages seized by Islamic militants were recovered Friday from a Jewish center in Mumbai after it was stormed by Indian commandos, an Israeli diplomat said.

"Five bodies of hostages have been found. They are Israeli nationals," Eli Belotserkovsky, deputy chief of mission at the Israeli embassy in New Delhi, told AFP.

"It's very sad that has happened," he added.

The Press Trust of India quoted Indian national security guard chief J.K. Dutt as saying the militant gunmen had killed the hostages during Friday's commando assault on the building.

"We had taken over the second floor of the house when a grenade was launched from above. Three hostages were killed by terrorists," Dutt said.

As the commando unit neared captives, the militants killed another two hostages on the fourth floor, he added. AFP

A HOTEL GUEST looks out from a broken window of the besieged Oberoi hotel in in Mumbai, Greece capped by Islamist militants in a hostage bid even as losing ends last night even as he came on Friday at the end of a siege spanned overnight, while commandos stormed a nearby Jewish center where Israeli hostages were held. AFP

Snipers stationed in buildings opposite the center began the attack, with commandos first on the building on at least nine commando [illegible] themselves by rope onto the roof from a circling Indian Air Force helicopter.

Hundreds of onlookers, many with binoculars, crowded onto the roofs and in narrow alleys of southern Mumbai, trying to catch a glimpse of the dramatic [illegible] assault.

It was not immediately clear if there were hostages in the building or their fate.

On Thursday morning, two workers and a child escaped from the building, the only people to emerge so far. The child was identified as Moshe Holtzberg, 2, the son of Rabbi Gavriel Noach Holtzberg, the main representative of Chabad house. The child was unharmed, but his mother were noticed in blood.

Well-coordinated strikes

The well-coordinated strikes by small bands of gunmen wreaking Wednesday night left the city shell-shocked, but the sporadic gunfire and explosions at the Taj Mahal and Oberoi hotels dwindled overnight, confirming the siege there might be winding down.

Security forces stormed rooms by room at the hotels—one of the top gathering spots for the Mumbai elite—but there were no guarantees or shots. Commandos had spent much of Thursday bringing out hostages, trapped guests and cowering from the hotels in small groups while firefighters battled flames that erupted. The fires were out by Friday.

The Mumbai police's own home secretary said dozens of hostages had been freed from the Oberoi and dozens more were still trapped inside. More than 400 people were brought out of the Taj Mahal on Thursday.

Authorities said they had killed three gunmen at the Taj. However, Army commandos said they believed there were still two or three more militants in the Taj and about 25 civilians. "We need to get them out of the rooms they have locked themselves into," said Brig. Bobby Mathews.

'External forces'

Union Minister Manmohan Singh blamed "external forces" for the violence—a phrase sometimes used to refer to Pakistani militants, whom Indian authorities often blame attacks on.

The gunmen were well-prepared, some carrying large bags of almonds to keep up their energy during the fight. Their main targets appeared to be Americans, Britons and Jews, though most of the dead seemed to be Indians and foreign tourists caught in the random gunfire.

The gunmen—some of whom [illegible] casually flaunt their targets to Hindu and Tehlka—clearly were ready for a siege.

"They have AK-47's and grenades. They have bags full of grenades and have come fully prepared," said Maj. Gen. H.S. Hooda.

Ramen Tata, who runs the company that owns the elegant Taj Mahal, said they had detailed knowledge of the layout of the hotels.

US team coming

A US investigative team was heading to Mumbai, a state department official said Thursday evening, speaking on condition of anonymity because the US and Indian governments were still working out final details. The official declined to identify which agency or agencies the team members came from.

Delhi has been shaken repeatedly by [illegible] militants in recent years, but most of them were coordinated bombings: striking random crowded places: markets, street corners, parks.

Analysts around the world were debating whether the gunmen could have been tied to—or inspired by—al-Qaida. Reports from Reuters and AP

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OPINION

Hasty conclusion

EDITORIAL

TERRORISM IS NO STRANGER TO INDIA WHERE sectarian violence has killed about 3,600 people in the last four years alone. But Wednesday's attacks in an upscale quarter of Mumbai, a city that saw 187 deaths in a series of bombings in July 2006, scaled new heights of barbarousness and shock value. If it was the handiwork of al-Qaida, as some terrorism experts suspect, it would be their third most successful operation in terms of casualties, next only to the World Trade Center attacks in 2001 and the Bali bombing of 2002.

The raid on Mumbai started with 17 young terrorists being dropped at sea and taking a speedboat to India's business capital. As soon as they landed, they commandeered some vehicles and proceeded to their targets, shooting at people along the way. Within minutes, they attacked 10 different establishments, including two hotspots, a train station and a chaat restaurant, occupied two five-star hotels and a Jewish center and held scores of people hostage. Mumbai's night of terror stretched into two days, and as of this writing, 130 people lay dead and more than 300 wounded.

A group calling itself Deccan Mujahideen claimed credit for the well-coordinated attack, but that was the first time Indian authorities heard of the group. Neither is it clear what the group's grievances are or what it is fighting for, although one terrorist was said to have told an Indian TV station that they were Indians and that they were retaliating for the bad treatment of Muslims.

All these questions should be cleared in due time, since Indian authorities have in their custody nine of the attackers. In the meantime, the least that Indian officials should do is keep their suspicions to themselves. No useful purpose is served by pointing prematurely and without proof an accusing finger at Pakistan—even if it is India's traditional foe.

But that is what some of India's top officials have been doing almost as soon as the first shots were fired in Mumbai. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said the group that launched the attack was "based outside the country," a description customarily interpreted to mean Pakistan. He warned "our neighbors that the use of their territory for launching attacks on us will not be tolerated, and that there would be a cost if suitable measures are not taken by them." The top military official leading the rescue of hostages went further and directly accused Pakistanis of involvement in the attacks, a charge that Pakistan vigorously denied. And the Indian media have joined in with one newspaper saying some of the terrorists were members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani-based group fighting Indian rule in Kashmir.

Of course, all these suspicions or accusations might be validated by later investigations. But absent any clear proof of Pakistan's involvement, it seems the height of irresponsibility to blame that country right away, given the grief and anger Indians must be feeling over the carnage that happened in one of its major cities. At the very least, journalistic statements like this of their prime minister could spark a new round of reprisals against India's Muslim minority by Hindu fanatics. At worst, it could erupt into a new war between the two countries, which both boast of being in possession of nuclear bombs. And India surely wants neither.

Unless it can be shown that Pakistan's government is involved, India might stand a better chance of winning the war against terrorists by seeking the cooperation of its neighbor.

After Bonifacio

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

WHILE OFFICIALS CONFLICTED WITH NATIONAL Heroes Day, Nov. 30 is a day we are asked to remember the heroism of Andres Bonifacio, the father of the Philippine Revolution. It is his birthday, the last day of St. Andrew, after whom he was named. Most Filipinos do not remember when he died, or indeed, how he died. The manner of his death is one of those inconvenient truths we have managed from our national official narrative.

Like Rizal, Bonifacio did not live long enough to see the country emerge from the shadows of Spanish rule. But unlike Rizal, who met martyrdom at the Spanish's hands, Bonifacio was killed by his own comrades. Set tribunals were set up against the leadership of Gen. Emilio Spatino, de who was installed as the Tejeros Convention, he was tried for treason, and executed on May 10, 1897. He was 33. The founder of the Katipunan—the one, in the words of Carmen Guerrero Nakpil, "who had guts and gumption like no other," had become, in the eyes of the new leaders, a danger to the revolution.

The elimination of Bonifacio did not advance the cause of the revolution. Soon after the talks were meeting at Tejeros, Biz Cavite forces led by Aguinaldo's forces fell one after another. These defeats led straight to the negotiations that culminated in the pact of Biak-na-bato. The shameful agreement with the Spanish government provided for the surrender and voluntary exile of the Aguinaldo-led group to Hong Kong on Dec. 27, 1897. In exchange for P900,000 fortunately, Filipinos did not lend their leaders' call for the surrender of arms and the termination of the struggle. The revolution continued.

The fortunes of the revolution changed dramatically with the outbreak of the Spanish American War in April 1898. Out of sympathy for the Cuban revolution against Spain, the United States crossed the conditions that would justify declaring war against Spain, less than a week after war was declared, Commodore George Dewey sailed to the Philippines and effortlessly destroyed the Spanish fleet on Manila Bay.

The leaders of the Hong Kong junta had been confering with American representatives in Hong Kong and Singapore. They saw in the US intervention an opportunity to reclaim their leadership of the revolution. Upon their arrival in Manila, the American saw in the Filipino revolutionary forces an ancient army that could keep the beleaguered Spanish soldiers busy pending the arrival of US troops. An American boat brought Aguinaldo and his fellow exiles back to the Philippines on May 19, 1898. Five days later, Aguinaldo announced the formation of a dictatorial government that acknowledged "the dominion and protection" of "the great and powerful North American nation."

By June 12, 1898, barely a month after his arrival from Hong Kong, Aguinaldo proclaimed Philippine independence. By most accounts, this declaration was premature and flawed. But Aguinaldo was engaged in a complex political maneuver vis-à-vis Spain, the United States, and the rest of Filipino revolutionary leaders in the field. These events soon posed along about June 12 however. Decbik-day, Aguinaldo met diplomatic Mabini and made him his political adviser. Mabini never lost sight of the basic nationalist direction of the revolution. It was he who single-handedly prevented the Aguinaldo regime from becoming a blind tool of client and foreign interests.

Conditions were changing very fast. At every point, the brilliant Mabini knew how the fledgling revolutionary government should respond. But time was not on the revolutionary's side. The Spaniards had no intention of recognizing Filipino sovereignty; they would cede control of the islands only to the Americans. Still, the Filipinos wanted to show the world they were already in full control of their own country and that a functioning modern government was already in place.

And that is why the last six months of the year 1898, a hundred and ten years ago, became for Filipinos a heroic season of insane exercise. Malolos had restored the local government to be fully formed under the command of a powerful executive before political power was to be shared with a legislature. But Aguinaldo had already issued an order to convene a national congress—mainly to create the impression of institutionalism in the unformulated.

The Malolos Congress convened in September 1898. Technically it did not have the power of a constituent assembly. But the delegates, a large number of whom were foreign-educated lawyers, were keen to show the world that they knew how to create laws and to live by them. They also wanted to assert legislative power as a check on the executive. Accordingly, they proceeded to draft a constitution appropriate to an independent republic, using the French constitution as their model. They created the nation, but remarkably they omitted any reference to its territory. They would not presume Muslim Mindanao's membership in the new nation.

All these were overtaken by the Dec. 10, 1898 Treaty of Paris, by which Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States for the modest sum of $20 million. On Feb. 4, 1899, the young republic found himself at war with the new invader. But perhaps the unlikeliest out of all was when, at the moment of truth, his relatives were, who, only a few months before, were busy serving the constitutional regime abandoned her in exchange for positions in the new colonial government. Since then, the country has always extended the unending vision of Mabini and the audacity of Bonifacio.

* * *

Comments to public.lives@gmail.com

Non-transferable fall

FOREIGN COMMENT

IT WAS ONLY IN JULY THAT THE PRICE OF "BLACK GOLD" PASSED—at $147 a barrel—three times higher than today. The fall in oil price has to do, first and foremost, with market reactions to lower growth part of the world economy.

While the fall in oil price is undoubtedly cheerfully welcomed by consumers, one should keep in mind that the unusually steep rise in oil price during the first half of the year is the main engine that has driven inflation.

Higher world market prices for commodities such as oil is often used as a justification for hiking prices for local products and services. But when world market prices fall, it seems this reduction is rarely transferred to local prices in, say, cash inflow or has been made.

Rumsfeld (Tellus, Estonia)

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Wanted: white knights to act in morality plays

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

THE FAMOUSLY FIGHT FOR THE ARROYO-ordered, 137-hectare Hacienda Luisita, is playing out like some kind of morality play where the heroes are free all kinds of trouble, but somehow get to be rescued at the last minute. Remember, like the forces of good vanquishing the forces of evil.

Sen. Teresa Pimentel figured prominently in the previous chapter, and now Hyman Rights Commission Chair Leila de Lima has entered the scene. Hooray for the white knights.

In this scheme, last May 15, I wrote that the moment dissident on the Senate floor both the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Land Bank of the Philippines be crafting, and shamed or forced them into completing the already seven-year long land valuation process of the Hacienda Luisita. The update was that P4.1 million cash deposit was made by Land Bank in favor of Rizalde Corporation, as required by law, in payment for the land.

As an aside, that amount comes to P267,500 per hectare. Compare this to the one-time Hacienda Velez Malaga, which was valued at something like P192,000 per hectare. The latter is considered prime farm land, the former is in the boondocks. One reading between the lines may see this as an attempt to win hearts or points with the mighty foreigner, or to assuage their basic feelings.

The delays were short lived. The Register of Deeds (ROD) of Bacolod (Double Gamuza) is his name), whose role should have been purely ministerial—i.e., cannot the Rizalde title and transfer it to the government—refused to do it on the grounds that the Land Bank's payee should be Miguel Aquino, also known as the first Duke, because of some notation on the Rizalde title. Apparently in 1996 Rizalde could not pay its land taxes, and Mike Arroyo came to the rescue, and a notation was made at the back of the title that he had a lien on it. This is quite of the fact that Mike Arroyo apparently created some kind of a declaration of trust saying that he had no interest in the property and that Rizalde could do with it as it willed. One reading between the lines may see this as Gen. Angelo Reyes at the re-entering his name.

Gamuza's intransigence was a blow to the farmers, because if the Rizalde title could not be cancelled and transferred to the government, the DAR could issue the CLOA to the farmers. That's where some of the 6,296 farmer beneficiaries of the Hacienda Luisita Inc. expected to get the Land Registration Authority (LRA) to direct Gamuza to perform his ministerial duties forthwith.

But our good guys were stymied again. In the course of more than two weeks, they made three attempts to see the LRA administrator, Atty. Benedicto Ilarg, to plead their cause. But Ilarg was too busy to see them—and reading between the lines is getting tiresome. Two days ago, they made a fourth attempt, encouraged by some members of the media who had told them that Ilarg was going to dialogue with them at 9 a.m. on Thursday.

Alas, Ilarg was only did not give them the time of day; he decided to play hard ball. The farmers were asked to leave the lobby of the LRA, and when they insisted on waiting for Ilarg, the PNP was called in. The farmers were dragged with all their grievances, and hauled off to jail. Just like that. Why illegal assembly? The police likened the farmers staying in the lobby of the LRA to unlawful guests refusing to leave a homeowner's living room. As if the LRA, or any government office for that matter, were that private. Anyway, the farmers are in charge, Ilarg's unofficially announced.

But no incriminated above. Jo Lilia of the Human Rights Commission came to the rescue. As of yesterday, at press time, the farmers were already released, with both the fiscal and the LRA singing a different tune. The LRA has now agreed to dialogue with the farmers on Tuesday. The Lilias claimed they had had info a raid hall.

Granted: BOD Gamuza, however, has not changed his tune. Another white knight is awaited.

But if the reader at this point is thoroughly disgusted at how poor farmers are at the mercy of the rich and the powerful, prepare yourself for my monthly rage at the economic horror story.

Fifty-seven farmers in Bacnotan, Camarines Sur, were awarded CLOAs for 150 hectares of land in late 1997 after almost three years of due process. They took possession of that land in early 1998. In July of that year, the former owners initiated the land conversion process, and in late 1998 the farmers that their land was panic-land. This was denied for a very simple reason: the on-site inspection at the beginning of the acquisition process showed that not only were the land planted to corn, rice and sugar, but only were there no infrastructure to indicate that cattle were being pastured there; the Municipal Treasury records showed that no cattle or other farm animals were registered in the previous landowners' name. In 1999, and the year the land was awarded to the 57 farmers.

Open and shut case, right? Wrong. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, in April of this year, decided in favor of the former owners, who had brought the matter up to the Office of the President on appeal. Without even getting the side of the farmers, Ermita ordered the farmers' CLOAs cancelled, which by the way, was illegal. The farmers, served with an eviction notice, are right now marching to Mendiola.

I must commend DAR Regional Director Generoso Delangkit Tinio, the municipal officers of Bacnotan and Naga as respectively—emphasis: Tinio must be rewarded. While other government officials had her guts and her clarity.

Will extending term limits get ratified?

LAST TUESDAY, AS A RESOURCE PERSON AT the meeting of the House Committee on Constitutional Amendments, I reported to the body that the latest 1995 national survey done last Sept. 20 to Oct. 4, underlined strong public opposition to extending the allowable terms of office of the president, the vice president, the senators, and the members of the House of Representatives.

This means that, if any amendment proposals for extending term limits are submitted to the people in a plebiscite, I would expect the outcome to be a solid NO.

The sponsor of course, that by the time of the plebiscite nothing substantial will have happened to change the people's minds on the issue. True, I told the committee, if the voters such amendments as submitted to them in a plebiscite, they will vote in the same vein as a NO. Those prospecting to amend constitutions are advised not to rush to be defeated by the Filipino people.

The strong popular opposition to extension of terms in office does not stop in opinion surveys. There are similar findings in eight earlier SWS surveys, as far back as 2002. How we fared in the Nov. 25 SWS media release, and archived in the SWS website. There is no sign that the opposition has diminished over the past 8 years. Indeed, the people have been reinforced public dissatisfaction with the performance of President Macapagal-Arroyo in the past several years. I do not see any basis for preparing a draft in public opinion to the favourable to them.

Some proponents of constitutional changes like Nicolas Enrique, the week before, prompted SWS to release the latest uncommissioned survey results as a public service (see Sunday, posted at Inquirer.net subscribers).

The latest SWS survey items released is a Straight Diagram sum of 42 percent and a Somewhat Disagree sum of 32 percent, totaling 74 percent rounded. At the other end of the scale, the Strongly Agree sum was only 4 percent and the Somewhat Agree sum was only 10 percent, totaling 13 percent (correctly rounded). Such a decisive 61-point spread of answers, with Strongly Disagree outranking Strongly Agree by ten to one, indicates the great intensity of public opposition to a way of SWS to convert this finding to the 1995 survey.

The spokesperson opposed to DPWH sitting in power beyond June 2010 is not quite strong enough but seems viable in the SWS surveys—72 in March-May, 70 in the August, 63 in the Balance of June, and 54 in the September survey. The latest survey result that two-thirds disagree now forward.

A separate battery of questions describes the current term limits of the president, vice president, senators, and representatives, and ask respondents to answer, and then to indicate whether the terms should be maintained, or lengthened, or shortened.

The maintained "majorities"—the percentages who prefer the present terms—are: president, 66; vice president, 56; and representatives, 58. Many said "don't know"—president 20; vice president, 28; senators, 36; and representatives, 26. Only a few said "lengthen"—president 9; vice president, 14; senators, 12; and representatives, 16.

This means, first of all, that the opposition to lengthening the term of the president is not diminished only or GMA in particular but also at anyone who becomes president. Secondly, it means that all the current holders of these positions are proving more unpopular, the more that they are seen trying to extend their term terms of office.

If, in the future, we switch to the parliamentary system, without saying anything outright about extending term limits or having the same effect, will, I think, be easily understood by the people, and hence will meet with the same fate—a defeat at the polls by the.

If, in the meantime, Speaker Prospero C. Nograles himself told the body that it proposed to go for parliamentary would be silent about term limits, but would definitely allow our only GMA but also Joseph Estrada, Fidel Ramos and Cory Aquino to run for a parliamentary seat. In this a possible plan, I wonder—it enjoys the support of just presidents for Charter-changing them to also run for their presidential seats, and then gaining a chance to test GMA in becoming prime minister (?)

There is one more question to answer: Why have committee members as to what topics of Charter proposals would most likely be accepted by the public. What about "economic reforms" (presumably opening the door wider for foreign ownership in the economy) or even reforms in taxation (?)

For instance, Rep. Arturo Tolentino he told the group of the need for what he called a "trigger mechanism"—some non-controversial, yet politically popular first step that would lead to an expected deal-breaker. Rep. Tolentino said he would propose that he brought to a reluctant Supreme Court for a decision on whether or not the House of Representatives could lose the members to participate in nonconstitutional reforms without the consent of the Senate.

I told the group that the public would probably regard any loss of constitutional reforms like mechanics. They would be sick.

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SOCIAL CLIMATE

Mahar Mangahas

'Muy simpatico'

OUR ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES teachers taught us year after year that our Filipinos are to mean the world over for "strong," "gentle," "generous," "kind," "hospitable," "warm," etc. I think it was in Grade 5 when I started to get tired of hearing those words (and their equivalents) every single school year. Cynical me even doubted that those adults (who were unelected) were telling the truth.

Then I went abroad to continuously and asked as a question in Spanish. When my hostess replied, "Filipino," the old lady's face lit up and she exclaimed: "Muy simpatico! Muy amable!" and engaged in a conversation.

Thanks to my hostess-years travelling, I learned that it holds true since back to Filipinos stand without the need to be very efficient at first sight. Even in the midst of the most difficult situations, I travelling and research made a lasting impression on how I gathered from subsequent conversations with my hostess and her friends that in this serious, employees preferred hiring our kababayans, as much because they got everything done. Their jobs ("Ang pino-bang ang trabaho") and were a most charming people to work with.

Meeting them both in and fellow tourists in the succeeding weeks there as well as in Paris, Rome and Amsterdam, I felt good as a Filipino to hear compliments like, "Oh, you Filipinos are so nice and friendly," "Everybody in the Philippines is so warm," "I was in Manila last year, the people were so hospitable," etc. My destination from passport for what to travel abroad. I realized, among other things, that our tourist leaders nowhere were right after all.

In November 2005, while on tour with the UST academic Books group to five cities in the United States to perform Dula Joaquin "Portrait of an Artist as Filipino," I saw a magazine about nursing at the home of our hostess in Bergenfield. How about it was a question. The answer which had the picture of a Filipino in the cover. The caption read "Nurse of the century."

This led us to ask our hostess about the reputation of Filipino nurses working there. She said that our Asian-Filipino—whether nurses, doctors or caregivers—had the reputation of being caring, compassionate, hard-working and patient, and were generally very "efficient" (yan ang sabi).

Last Oct. 23 to 28 saw me at the Bobbi Philippine Fiesta working as a volunteer for the Philippine Books and Initiative National Summit 2010 organized by the Department of Tourism. Its objective was to promote our country's treasures to generate the most number of visitors and to encourage Filipinos to promote all over the world. At the executive program, Tourism Undersecretary Cynthia L. Carlos wrote: "It seems as though it is only now that the Philippines is opening its doors to medical travelers and seekers of health and wellness from all over the world, simply because we Filipinos do not really like to brag." But now, the time is ripe to say goodbye to such modesty. Yesterday morning and most Monday one here is the name of Philippine medical tourism.

I have at the outset that the Filipino conference speakers, most of them doctors who studied and trained in prestigious universities and medical institutes abroad, would compare our world-famous ones, and more often-skilled, of course. But I thought, "Wow, this is news! Let the world!"

One doctor went on to speak still authority on their respective fields. In the panel discussion on "Showcasing the Centers of Excellence in the Philippines," Bro. Jaime, said, representing a prestigious Philippine hospital, discussed the services that their respective hospitals provide, including state-of-the-art technologies. Others spoke on the latest in medical procedures and surgeries. Their topics dealt with coming to the heart using the latest advances in medicine, joint replacement surgery, the importance of patient education on his/her own medical condition, surgical options when they need the best bills, and facial surgical reconstruction (and other health services) that are available in the Philippines.

Samuel Bernal, a physician, lawyer, molecular biologist and an expert in regenerative medicine, had this to say: "That we can bring our lives to the Philippines patients from Europe and other Asian countries and that they can receive medical care that is at par—or even above par—with medical care in the best centers of excellence in the world. Indeed, we have the best medical care abroad, when in fact, we have patients from Russia, Asia, Europe, from Hong Kong and Singapore, coming to the Philippines because they could not get cured in their home countries." Comparing the cost of surgery with highly impressive credentials and many horses attached to his name, I did not feel cynical at all about his statement.

I pray for the success of this endeavors. I would be over-joyful if our country were to earn the distinction of being the "Health and Wellness Capital of Asia" or the next dream. One doctor said that we could even be the medical capital for our doctors dollars can make the Philippines perfect for this role in a globalized world. However, I hope that this push toward enticing foreigners to come here does not betray our attention to the equally important medical and health concerns of our fellow Filipinos here at home. It's all very well if we can be of service to foreigners, for decades dating what they have been doing, but medical and health and wellness professionals will be able to help enhance our international image. But it would be equally, if not more, gratifying to know that they are able primarily to help improve the health and wellness of millions of Filipinos.

If our Filipinos are to be truly compassionate, friendly, gentle, gracious, hospitable, kind, nice, patient and warm to foreigners, we can and should be all that to each other first. Let's be muy simpatico right here and now.

Claude Lucas C. Deguilladelleras, 28, is an education graduate of the University of Santo Tomas. He teaches at AMA Computer College and is now taking his IT and sales economics and English-dubbed local television.

YOUNG BLOOD

Claude Lucas
C. Deguilladelleras

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course or company you're connected with. Please indicate if you're writing for the first time and if your work has been published before.

Everyone's business

COMMENTARY

Ramon del Rosario Jr.

JOINS THE PHILIPPINE BUSINESS FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (PBSD) was launched two years ago, I emphasized that collaboration among business, civil society, government and education community was crucial to promote education reform in the country.

The business community must work with government. Business can, and must, help provide the long-term perspective in the strategic efforts to reform the destiny of Philippine education. We can distinguish with foresight-set and well-drafted programs and projects that can reach beyond the present and better meet our resources, and become partners of government in its responsibilities and agenda.

Second, we must work with civil society. Many non-profit and non-government organizations, associations and coalitions have been working to improve the quality of education which formed vital, advancing limited success. We must identify the successful interventions and help replicate and multiply these. We must listen to the teachers that they may have promoted in working with schools and communities. We must invest business resources in programs that people have found valuable and the achievement of unanimous support.

Third, we must work with communities. Our experiences must underscore the power of our resources for education on local levels by working hand in hand with principals and teachers, elected officials, parents, community organizations, school boards, barangay officials and school PTA parents in education.

And fourth, we must work together as a true business community. In the Philippines, the business community is home to about P1.2 billion (USD 26 million) annually for education projects. But there is no unifying development that is behind these projects. As each endeavors gains we lose substantial gains in pockets, largely disproportionate to the resources we have pooled in. We must seriously look into policy directions even as we should't lay intervention onto the reading. Instead, we must adopt a multi-sectoral approach. We must push forward the various consolidation efforts being pursued within the business community. We must build synergies and push for genuine and sustainable reform hinged on professionals and accountability across the education process.

PBSD was conceptualized by a group of CEOs who came together to discuss the growing crisis in Philippine education. These discussions evolved into a business agenda for education, which includes making policy recommendations and directions on financing education, organizing and consolidating our basic education tools, addressing the low achievement in English, Science and Math, and focusing the efforts of business.

There are of course many challenges to forming a successful multi-sectoral collaboration for education. Some of the most serious issues are politics in education and corruption in government. So is the Philippines or in other countries.

Too many decisions on appointments, funding and policies are still made on the basis of what they do for politicians rather than what they do for education outcomes. Even the best-intentioned reform initiatives and effective collaboration on the field are negated.

Continuing education support—especially in the form of resource mobilization for education—smacks high levels of corruption paints a mixed picture. Aside from the private sector's valuable support to close gaps in education financing brought about by decimal, missing to outright misappropriation funds.

Politics and corruption do immeasurable harm to both public and private education. Private schools are losing left to fund for themselves in escalating wages to lure public educators, creating hundreds of thousands of empty seats that go to waste. By simple expansion of an existing education service-contracting scheme, these empty seats could actually meet the need for more low public education—well, possibly better quality—without the cost of building more and more classrooms. Furthermore, it provides millions of low-quality state and local universities and colleges a dwelling room government funds were from fee to education, taking away students from private colleges and universities and graduating more and more ill-trained workers and professionals.

Corruption is a problem that we must address. Business has to be committed to support it instead as a protection of a moral hazard and can result in better quality graduates that the business community will benefit from.

My recommendations to enhance collaboration for education are straightforward and simple.

1. Remove politics from education so that collaborative efforts can focus on education outcomes.

2. Stop corruption so that collaborative efforts can pursue a moral high ground.

3. Build a permanent national alliance based on enduring values and principles of education reform, and committed to the continuous improvement of Philippine learning systems at national and local levels, in public and private sectors, and from basic education to higher education, uniting partners far more forward on a shared vision for education.

As a business community, we have chosen not to leave the problem to government alone to remedying resources and continuing to work hand in hand with the many stakeholders in finding civil society groups and the Church. PBSD is an expression of that commitment. It says that we in business are in this for the long haul.

Excerpts from remarks delivered at the Asian Institute of Corporate Social Responsibility 2008 at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), Inquirer.net Photo, Singapore Air Resource Is, chair of Philippine Business for Education.

Asean: people-oriented or disoriented?

RECENTLY, THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFfairs in Thailand (the country holding the chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, came up with this motto for the recently ushered Asean Charter—"Asean Charter for Asean People." To observers, this phrase seems to herald a new and positive change for this subregional, intergovernmental body which has been criticized in the past as "government club" because of the lack of involvement of non-state actors in its processes.

On Oct. 31, 2009, following the ratification of the Charter by Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, Lt. Gen. Ong Keng Yong, the Asean secretary-general, said that the Asean Charter has a people-focused and more integrated outlook.

It is in the chapter on the purposes of Asean (Article 1) where it is emphasized that the association will "promote a people-oriented Asean in which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from, the process of integration and community building." This is one of the most positive points of the Charter, but the civil society groups, which have never been informed of the Asean processes, are skeptical of whether the Asean can actually fulfill this. The skepticism becomes evident when an Asean civil society group that wanted to attend an event organized by international issues chooses to go directly to ON bodies (of late that is the Asean).

As the phrase "people" have been overly used by the Asean, we in the civil society are wondering if the architects of the Asean Charter have a clear understanding of what "people" mean. Do they mean a people-oriented organization and if the Charter itself can be an inspiring document for the Asean people.

The more than 40 civil society organizations representing the work of Asean under the umbrella of the Solidarity for Asean Peoples' Advocacy (SAPA) Working Group—Asean Peoples' Assembly—the analysis of the Charter last year, prior to its signing. The network viewed the Charter as "a transparent mechanism that is a document that falls short of what is needed to establish a people-centered Asean."

The Asean Charter talks of the promotion and protection of human rights and social justice, good governance, and respect for the rule of law. Civil Charter and international law. However, it holds that these mechanisms and commitments are not new principles. Thus are not the Asean abiding by the principle of non-interference without any question, even in the human rights situations in Burma continue to deteriorate.

The issue has all to some whether the human rights situation in Burma has improved since 2007, the year that country was accepted as a member of the association. Human rights defenders (HRDs) in Burma have been calling international attention to the plight of pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 2,100 political prisoners the continuing ethnic conflicts, and the recent deportations of dozens of Burmese HRDs, including the student leaders of 1988, who took part in the September Saffron Revolution.

When we look at the Charter, chapter by chapter, we can see that the "people-centered" principle of the document is not reflected. Chapter 2 on the principles is among those calling. The Charter is non-intrusive, having been written by government officials without consultation with civil groups.

There is no mention of such institutionalized mechanisms as the NGO Consultative Status to the Asean or the Asean Peoples' Assembly, which is conducted during the decision-making processes of the Asean. No such mechanisms mentioned in chapter 5 on the Asean Summit, Asean Coordinating Council, Asean Community Councils, or the Asean Secretariat. Civil society gets mentioned only in relation to the role of the Asean Foundation in promoting greater awareness of the "Asean identity [and] close collaboration among the business sector, civil society, academic institutes and the media [sic] in Asean."

Without the participation of civil society, a civil society's place in the Asean is only in the socio-cultural realm, where it may be informed of or discuss related concerns. But it is not allowed to play an important role in the decision-making process relative to security and economy.

The Asean Charter does not even state civil society groups in the region are getting increasingly eager to see the association become more responsive to the Asean peoples' concerns, especially those relating to cross-boundary issues like human trafficking and those affecting migrant workers and refugees. Nor does the Charter provide for any joint action to combat the Asean human rights body.

The Asean Peoples' Forum, the Asean Civil Society Conference—to be held prior to the 14th Asean Summit in Chiang Mai—is an important venue where Asean leaders and governments can actually listen and learn how what their Asean constituents want from the Asean to be and to do.

The Asean Charter may not be the kind of Charter that the Asean peoples actually want, but it could serve as the trigger for the transformation of the Asean into a truly people-oriented body. The Asean, during its deliberations, needs to open up its doors to civil society groups in the region. The Asean Peoples' Assembly is one such forum where civil society groups in the region to be and to do.

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Rhiza Cruz Lumantas is at the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development's Southeast Asia program officer.

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Why GMA can stay beyond 2010

IT ABUNDANTLY CHECKS, OR LOgaries. Perish the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. That exactly was what happened when then Secretary Jesus Dureza made a "slip of the tongue" in his prayers to kick off a Cabinet meeting. On cue, 11/18/00) Obviously, Malacañang is seriously contemplating the possibility of a term extension for then Municipal Antonio.

God indeed has a lot of sense of humor. He has given this nation a government ruled by President who has the devious, an unjust and overbearing nature; secretary, but who would rather run for by invoking economic privilege, and many other officials who are beyond description. God has given us an opposition that stops opposing after they are given governmental positions.

Under the 1987 Constitution (Art. VIII, Sec. 9), "The Members of the Supreme Court ... shall be appointed by the President from a list of at least three nominees prepared by the Judicial and Bar Council for every vacancy. Such appointments need no confirmation." This departure from the old process whose presidential appointments to the judiciary shall be confirmed by the Commission on Appointments was introduced by the framers of the 1987 Constitution to shield the judges, and the appointment process, as much as possible, from politics.

As mandated by the Constitution, the President can only appoint from a list of at least three names submitted by the JBC. Thus, while appointments to the Supreme Court or to any other lower court be that number, not on the President's sound discretion, only the nominees found by the JBC (abstracted by the JBC. Consequently, the Presidency cannot reject all the nominees of the JBC, refrain to list, and ask for the inclusion of preferred candidates, contrary to the view of others. This is a limitation on the presidential prerogative. To be sure, this cannot be allowed under the mantle of the incumbent Chief Justice.

Just assume that the JBC will highly consider the recommendations of the SCAW, the Bantay-Korte on Supreme and other anti-graft organizations, and will nominate to perform its constitutional mandate functions and duties—independently—to the best interest of the high court, and the country.

In this regard, the public hearing on the first vacancy commenced on Nov. 10, 2000, at the Division Hearing Room, 1st Floor, Supreme Court.

—JOSE MERAS P. HARQUIL
Assistant court administrator
chief, Public Information Office
Supreme Court, Manila

JBC to consider SCAW, Bantay Korte recommendations

I WRITE IN REACTION TO THE various views and reports regarding the public's renewed concern over the appointment of new Supreme Court justices, which the enthusiasm of several members of Congress now pose will necessitate. ("Bantay Korte' to watch GMA's' choices for SC," Inquirer, 11/13/00; "Choosing SC justices, sounding board," Inquirer, 11/13/00; "7 justices to retire next year," Inquirer, 11/8/00, etc.)

The matter of appointments in the Supreme Court is a matter of high public interest. Thus, Chief Justice Hilario G. Davide himself has called on private groups to help search for the best candidates for the high court. Accordingly, the recent formation of a citizens' search committee within the Supreme Court appointments Watch (SCAW) committee, and the launching of Bantay Korte Inquirer on welcome developments toward the call of the Chief Justice.

Businesswoman's murder linked to corruption in gov't

THIS IS A REACTION TO THE news item titled "Businesswoman shot in ambush," (Inquirer, 11/25/00). I am a friend of the businesswoman in that report. I was watching the Manila Chess here in the United States for a much needed break.

I believe her murder is not merely about a "botched business deal." It is about corruption in high places, among the country's highest officials and their families and lapdogs in Congress. Meaning, it would tell no stories about politicians who did not care about projects but were merely concerned about their "share of the projects." She would be angry and sad about contractors who wanted cheat just to earn more at the expense of public interest.

And Sol Meñranda got from the cheaters who could not gain her honesty like was a cancer of the and she knew of the raw deal the people were always getting from government construction projects and "business partners." What is happening indeed to our country?

How many more unsung heroes will this sad country sacrifice? So, Nimz, this country is not worth dying for. For Filipinos like Sister Aimie Dizon?

—RAUL BAUTISTA
Olney, Maryland

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Probe of Samar project urged

ECHOS TO INQUIRER COLUMnist Dinah Cruz for exposing what could probably have been a bigger and more shocking scandal than the P720-million fertilizer scam. (Inquirer, 11/12/00) I am referring to the aborted P14-billion Samar Geothermal Road (SGR) project.

As Cruz pointed out in her column, the "entire length of the SGR project has been divided into nine packages, and seven of them have almost identical cost estimates (P1.66 billion) with a range of differences in terrain, soil conditions, etc."

Happily, as a result of Cruz's exposé, the bidding for the project, which was set for Nov. 8, was cancelled. End of story? It should not be.

It is now an attempt by some people to dell said government in this story episode has been exposed. Who prepared the documents of the proposed project, as the programs of work (POW), contractual terms, land surveys, etc.? Indeed, was an actual land survey of the proposed roadway conducted? Who conducted it? If so, how could the Department of Public Works and Highways have arrived at the "almost identical cost estimates" of P166 million each for seven of the 10 project packages?

Are DPWH engineers behind this project that incompetent that they came up with "almost identical cost estimates for seven contract packages despite the differences in terrain, soil conditions, etc."? Either way, it is incumbent upon DPWH officials, especially Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane, to get to the bottom of this confusion, pinpoint those responsible, and let the people know who plans.

If corrupted robbery and criminal acts are punishable by law, the more fact that the SGR project was published for public bidding under highly irregular circumstances as cited by Cruz, are in-depth investigations of the SGR project is imperative.

—FLOYD S. RAFFINGORE
23 Narra St.,
Tondo, Manila

Unchristian and unprofessional

COMMEND DE QUIROS LOVES to shoot from the rooftops that he is not one of those Marcos Defenders Santiago's biggest fans. Some other times, he lavish over her words him to be "courageous, etc. (re Quiros' Nov. 20 column) wee to exception.

Senator Santiago has interested time and again that the suspects whenever the people elect as president, and will cooperate with the current administration toward national interest. It is all a matter of principle, and he (Quiros) believes he has the monopoly of that.

Dr. Quiros missed the point when he compared Senator Santiago with Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno. If the senator would be mediator to anybody, that would be the Filipino people who elected her to office.

Dr. Quiros went beyond the boundaries of good taste when he insinuated that Senator Santiago, along with other Senate Presidents Juan Ponce Enrile, should have died in the ensuing civil strife (Ver III). It was not enough for him to smear the name and reputation of honest Santiago, columns after columns, but he also made a wished death upon the senator. Coming from a man who trumpets his supposed moral ascendancy, Dr. Quiros' statements were unprofessional and unchristian.

—EDGAR M. TOLEDAN,
public affairs
and media relations,
Office of Sen. Miriam
Defensor-Santiago

Smear job to sell gerrymandering

I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS my concern about some allegations my political opponents have made against me. These allegations have been published by the Inquirer.

I have always emphasized that the issues are fabricated, twisted and manipulated to push the political desires of my foes and to hide the true issue here... the gerrymandering of Barangay San Lorenzo.

In February of this year the Makati City Council issued a resolution that sought the reorganization of the boundaries of seven barangays in Barangay San Lorenzo. The affected residents opposed it as there was no genuine consultation, no vote or referendum and no benefit to be gained from being transferred to another barangay (in several occasions, I was approached to change my stand on the issue but I considered it unethical to do so. I told those who approached me that I would support the people who are for the gerrymandering of Barangay San Lorenzo. My supporters and I have come to this conclusion simply after reading their resolution but in the meantime — for that matter, I have always put public opinion and destroy my integrity and credibility. My political detractors have continuously goaded my honorable mayor to act on their lies to a point wherein a search warrant before filing their complaint, our mayor issued a public statement saying that "he is only waiting for a complaint to be filed against me which will be acted on immediately."

My enemies and intimidated could my political foes be. To me and my supporters, it is obvious that they are doing a political butcher job that is meant to destroy long before the elections. The only unbiased Barangay official in the city of Makati to refute the gerrymandering of Barangay San Lorenzo is doing more friendly political lines.

I and my supporters are waiting for their charges in court because all their frivolous fabrications with facts and evidence as the proper crime and venue and in the right courts, I stand by.

To my constituents in Barangay San Lorenzo and in Makati City residents, I assure you that my good men and women are doing good things in our barangay. Mabuhay ang Bisaked! Mabuhay ang Barangay San Lorenzo!

—ROBERTO ROBUSTIANO TANADA
Barangay chair,
Barangay San Lorenzo,
61 Immaculate,
corner Orosa
and Velasco,
Makati City

Metrobank: Extending partnerships with Overseas Filipinos

Bishops finally come to their senses on RH bill

THANK GOODNESS THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS have come to their senses and have reiterated in their wholesale rejection of the reproductive health bill. They may have finally realized that the battle cannot be fought just in the Mendiola or outdoor gallery of Congress. Signature campaigns and petitions still simply not do. They would be like "throwing pearls before thick-hides of many legislators. The pro-lifers badly need legislators who will, on the debate floor, to committee meetings and to caucuses, intelligently demolish each and every provision that can possibly harm or cause the death of innocents.

I agree that reproductive health should be taught in school. Most parents do not teach sexuality and reproductive health at home. They should. When parents don't, schools, as agents of state policy should make up for the parents' sin of omission. The bishops can lobby for a more holistic curriculum on human sexuality, which would be better than the narrow government proposal.

It cannot be denied that some hormonal contraceptive, injectables and intra-uterine devices have caused illnesses, infertility and, at worst, deaths. There are scientific medical studies that have proven this. Sadly, the pro-life advocates do not present these studies.

Pelvic inflammatory disease is the biggest cause of factors at keeping infectious diseases from being transmitted, there is something objectionable about the idea that preventing the sperm from meeting the ovum is interference in the biological purposes of our reproductive systems and in the functioning of life itself.

Is there one single parish in Metro Manila or anywhere else in the country that ovariectomy (removal of the ovaries) or hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) is performed? Why? Because these are life-threatening operations. Yet, these are done to save lives. Why? Because the benefits outweigh the risks.

Is there one single parish in Metro Manila or anywhere else in the country that ovariectomy (removal of the ovaries) or hysterectomy (removal of the uterus) is performed? Why? Because these are life-threatening operations. Yet, these are done to save lives. Why? Because the benefits outweigh the risks.

—ROMEO M. BOBIS
bobis0417@yahoo.com

Disconcerted by lack of political will to enforce law

I AM A CONCERNED CITIZEN OF SARIAYA and a keen observer of current events and issues that gravely affect our country and, more particularly, our province. Recently, I read in a local newspaper that Governor Tan has been made to print and broadcast seven media because of a six-month suspension order handed down by the Ombudsman for grave misconduct, dishonesty, oppression and abuse of authority. This suspension order is being implemented by Vice Governor Ebarle. It is recalled himself inside the provincial capitol, and he has vowed to remain in office despite the fact that his vice governor, Serafin Roman, has been sworn in to take his place.

I couldn't help but be concerned about the lack of political will to implement and enforce the law. Governor Tan is a very powerful local figure, by openly defying a legal order of a duly constituted authority. The Department of Interior and Local Government has been inefficient and seemingly powerless against the transgressions of this obstinate governor, who is having his way in the province. He has also threatened to penalize because of the gravity of the crimes and enormity of the amounts involved, in at least two cases that have been filed against him.

Garcia was the first elected official who was recalled from office, when the people of Quezon Province voted to oust him in a recent case of similar charges brought against him in 1993.

With all good and law-abiding citizens jammed tilly by white-collar elected public officials brazenly disobey, defy and ignore the law which they have sworn to protect and defend upon their assumption of office?

—RUPERTO M. DEVILLA
5 Tinajero, Balanga, Bataan

Across the NATION
Editor Tony Bergonia

Senate to probe Subic Hanjin deaths

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—SEN. PIA CAYETANO HAS asked the Senate labor committee to investigate the Korean shipbuilder Hanjin, the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority and the Labor department for the deaths of Filipino workers at the shipyard inside the Subic Bay Freeport since 2006.

"The Hanjin shipyard has virtually become a modern-day killing field, but not one Hanjin official has been jailed or even charged in court!" Cayetano said in a statement on Friday following the deaths of Philip Mendiona and Jose Verzo Gil-on Nov. 20 and 25, respectively.

Byong Jong Yu, general manager of the Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction Philippines Inc., did not reply when the Inquirer asked for comment.

Yu, in a Thursday interview, said 11 workers had died from work-related accidents while two others had died in traffic-related incidents in the shipyard in Subic, Zambales.

Malaria deaths

Zambales Gov. Amor Deloso on Friday said 69 had died from accident at the shipyard and malaria while living near the shipyard during the construction period.

"The deaths are the aftermath of the arrogant and imperious attitude of Hanjin, try acting like it's beyond the clutches of the law," Deloso said, referring to the company's alleged refusal to be inspected by local authorities.

The People's Task Force for Hanjin and Subic Bay Inc. counted at least 16 deaths as of June 2008.

Cayetano said she would not dispute that Hanjin has infused investments in the economy and employed 13,000 Filipinos.

"Though the $14-billion project, the company poured the single largest direct investment in the Philippines in 2005.

It employs 8,000 workers in the shipbuilding works and 5,000 others for the construction of a second shipyard. President Macapagal-Arroyo has issued an executive order directing all government departments to support Hanjin's project in the Subic Bay Freeport and its other facility in Mindanao.

"But none of these can justify the authorities' lack of conviction to punish those responsible and put a stop to the string of workers' deaths in Hanjin," Cayetano said.

Safety doubts

She said the deaths of Mendiona and Gil-on and doubts on the effectiveness of the [safety] measures supposedly undertaken, or if these are being implemented at all."

SBMA Administrator Armand Arreza said the agency welcomes the investigation.

"The SBMA and the OSEZ Department of Labor and Employment] have been working with Hanjin to ensure full compliance with labor and safety standards," Arreza said.

He said the effort include an accreditation of 39 subcontractors of Hanjin, the provision of protective equipment to workers and basic safety education on fires, installation of safety signs, and the deployment of roving teams that enforce safety standards.

Rosalina Abreu, president of the Shipbuilders and Construction Workers Association, said the Senate probe should not only establish the violations of labor and safety standards but also punish the maltreatment of Filipino workers by their Korean superiors.

Tonette Orejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

2 charged in murder of Misamis radioman

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Journalists in Misamis Oriental said this city said they were happy that the Task Force Against Political Violence (TFPV) has finally identified the killers of broadcaster Aldon Padrigao.

Padrigao, who was based in Ozamiz City in Misamis Occidental, was dropping off his daughter at her school on Nov. 17 when he was attacked by two motorcycle-riding men wearing crash helmets.

Yesterday, the task force headed by Assistant Undersecretary Ricardo Diesmos announced that it has finally charged Benjamin Rivera and Adolf Aguirre for Padrigao's murder.

Suspects in one of Misamis Oriental's most wanted persons and is a known killer.

Bingo Alcorado, of the Lingayen-do Oro Press Club and a friend of Padrigao, said they believe that the two gunmen were hired by "unseen forces."

"We still believe that we are unseen forces behind the killing. It was not an act of our enemies. We would like to get the name of the mastermind behind this dastardly act," Alcorado, a member of the task force, said.

Manuel Asuncion, who hosts a program in Radyo Natin, urged the police and the National Bureau of Investigation not to waver in their investigation.

Asuncion said the same people that had Padrigao killed have also coerced interviewing him.

"I love hosts after Padrigao was killed, it seemed to phase me from a man who could be still alive in our all because were making so much noise on the radio," he said.

"They are still around," he said. Mic Cecilia Rodriguez, *Inquirer Mindanao*

STREET JOB
A boy has turned Quirino Quirino Street in Makati, Cebu City into his job site as he rides his unit and finds selling bottled water amid passing cars. Millions of children nationwide are forced to find work in rural and urban areas.

Mayor alarmed by attacks on churches

COMBOBO CITY—MAYOR George Tan of Babatan, North Cotabato expressed alarm over the series of attempts to bomb Christian churches in his town, saying a "third party" might be out to fuel conflict between Christians and Muslims.

Babatan, an agricultural town bordered by Maguindanao, has a Christian-Muslim population ratio of 75:25.

On Thursday, authorities recovered a bomb near the Iglesia ni Cristo church in the town.

The bomb was immediately detonated by military bomb experts, according to Babatan police head, Chief Insp. Franklin Arato.

The night before, a powerful explosion took place in front of a Jehovah's Witnesses church.

No one was injured in the explosion, which was caused by an improvised explosive made from an 81 mm mortar shell, according to Arato.

Last month, the military also claimed it killed another attempt to bomb the town's public market when soldiers recovered three live mortars packed in a box and found and defused a trigger mechanism.

Col. Julito Arafo, spokesperson of the military's 6th Infantry Division based in Shariff Aguak province, said the improvised explosive devices in Cotabato have the signature of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

He said MILF rebels might have wanted to divert the military's attention away from Maguindanao, where Ondoy Ampatuan and his followers were being hunted down since August. Charlie Sobino, *Edwin Fernandez and Dennis Jay Santos, Inquirer Mindanao*

Bishops back antimining Vizcaya priest

BAYOMBONG, NUEVA VIZCAYA—Catholic Bishop Ramon Villena and other Church leaders here have stood by one of their priests whose stories local officials were demanding in Quezon town, about 225 km northeast of the provincial capital.

In a statement, Villena said the province's clergy expressed its "wholehearted and unwavering support" for Fr. Emiliano Bote III, who has been waging a crusade against corruption in government and mining in the town.

"On behalf of the clergy of the Diocese of Bayombong, I reiterate our full support to (Bote). He remains pastor of the flock and his appointment shall continue to be in effect until it shall be revoked by no less by the legitimate superior of the congregation where he belongs," the bishop said.

Boria, parish priest of St. Michael the Archangel parish in Quezon, has been the subject of a petition by 24 town and village officials, who the priest has accused of allegedly receiving favors from a mining company, purportedly to endorse the dam embankment of a mining project.

In their petition, which was endorsed by Mayor Aurelio Salazar, the officials asked Villena to censor the members of Diocesan Pastoral Council, namely Bote, supposedly leading "baseless" allegations against them during his church sermons.

The 30-year-old priest has led the villagers' campaign against an ongoing mining exploration in upland Barangay village, which, they said, has been granted an exploration permit despite the lack of consultation with community members.

"Obvious, in his barrage of false accusations, is indeed failing such his moral and spiritual functions in developing a culture demonstrating a life God commanded us to live—a life of love in harmony with the Gospel," the group said. Melvin Gascon, *Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Oil spill damage continues 2 years after in Guimaras areas

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE OIL sludge may not be visible anymore but the damage to the marine resources of Guimaras Island has persisted two years after a massive oil spill ravaged the island, according to scientists.

Scientific studies showed accumulation in breeding and growth of mangroves, sea grass, marine animals and sea cucumbers, and scientists attributed these results to the contamination of the marine environment by bunker fuel from the tanker MT Solar 1.

The studies, presented on Thursday during the opening of the two-day Visayas Regional Conference on Solar 1 Oil Spill, showed the marine resources still suffer from stress brought by the contamination despite showing signs of recovery.

"There are good signs showing recovery but the studies show continued stress to marine resources brought by the contamination," said Dr. Hazel Arceo Subido, UPV Oil Spill Response program manager.

At least 100 scientists, government officials and agencies that responded to the disaster attended the conference held at the University of the Philippines Visayas campus.

The oil spill came on Aug. 11, 2006 after the MT Solar 1, chartered by Petron Corp., sank in stormy seas southeast of Guimaras spilling more than 2.1 million liters of bunker fuel oil it was transporting from Petron to Guimaras.

It was considered as the country's worst oil spill, with around 8,500 families or 42,000 persons affected in Guimaras and some parts of Iloilo.

It also contaminated 65 hectares of mangrove forests in Cabrera, Western Visayas Director of the Office of Civil Defense.

The studies were mostly undertaken at the 1,116-hectare Taklong Island National Marine Reserve (Tnmr) in Nueva Valencia town, the hardest hit among the island province's five municipalities.

Subido, who chaired the conference, said his team—through six monitoring stations in the Tnmr mangroves—found canopy covers and leaf sizes reduced significantly.

The study made between October 2007 to September 2008 in six monitoring stations, also showed new deformities.

The mangroves were the source for young fish and commercial marine resources.

The studies found that soil-to-groundwater balance in oiled areas was higher compared to areas unaffected by the oil spill, Subido said.

He also raised concern over the possible entry of heavy metals like copper, lead, nickel and zinc—which were found to have a higher concentration in contaminated areas—into the food chain.

Subido said it was too early to conclude that the trees would fully recover.

PHOTO taken in August 2006 shows an Army volunteer helping clean up oil that covered mangrove trees in Nueva Valencia, Guimaras.

Tuna fishers lose P200M, says group

By Aquilino Zuvate and Gerrwalina Lacuesta
Inquirer Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Tuna fishermen have incurred losses of at least P200 million during the past two months because of pirate raids and bad weather, an industry official said yesterday.

Rogen Lim, president of the alliance of Tuna Handliners in the South Cotabato-Sultan Kudarat-Sarangani-General Santos City (SocSarGen) area, said his group thought they could already recover from losses when fuel prices recently started to go down.

"The tuna industry was about to bounce back when another whammy hit us hard. Our boats cannot sail out to sea due to bad weather," Lim said.

For weeks now, nine have been pirating many parts of Mindanao.

Risks

Lim said since September, only nine handline vessels from the fleet docked in port.

"Tuna handliner vessels operating in international waters were 100 percent paralyzed since the month of September and those operating in our territorial waters are very careful because of the presence of sea pirates. This is one problem issue that we're trying to address with the help of various government agencies," Lim said.

He said that there was no remedy for the bad weather but the issue of piracy should be addressed.

Lim said fishing grounds near the provinces of Jolo, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Sarangani, Davao del Sur and Davao Oriental were safe now but fishing operations in these areas are often disrupted by the presence of sea pirates.

He said among the solutions his group thought of against piracy was to ask government to allow them to carry firearms.

"Big tuna are still abundant in our very fishing grounds. There's no need to go to international fishing grounds if only our territorial waters are safeguarded against sea marauders," Lim said.

Alternative

In Davao City, an official of Vitarich Corp. urged fishermen to consider growing the thinking catfish, which has become so popular abroad that it is now a P700-million business.

"It can be a lucrative option for tilapia and bangus farmers in Mindanao," Eduardo Lazo, Vitarich business development manager, said.

Gorrencio, wife Marilyn in Balicasa and Pampanga grow the thinking fish in the Philippines.

"Right now, we're still in operation and one of the biggest importers are high-end restaurants in Mindanao," Lazo said.

Rosalia Delima, assistant director of the Department of Trade and Industry in Southern Mindanao, said exporters should ensure better production of the thinking catfish, also known in Pangasinan hyperbalcus and Pampanga Pangasinan, because of its high import potential.

Based on data presented by Vitarich, exports of thinking catfish in 2008 reached as high as $750 million, mainly to Russia, Poland, the whole of Europe, the US and Australia.

Quick returns

"It's a fast growing fish that can be harvested in only six months and can easily be grown even in smoky waters," Delima said.

Except for its body, which is flat like saltwater fish, the thinking catfish looks like the biggest cousin of the local "hito" that is abundant in Mindanao rivers.

Delima said local fish exporters, especially those in General Santos and Sarangani, can maximize their focus area to solve this kind of fish. Aquilino Zuvate and Gerrwalina Lacuesta, Inquirer Mindanao

PASSING THROUGH
A worker passes through what looks like an oversized wreath that would be displayed in malls in Baguio City for the Christmas season. Despite recession fears, local businessmen try to uplift spirits by decorating the city for the holidays.
STORY AND PHOTO ON PAGE A19

NEWSBRIEFS

■ DAVAO CITY

Accountants meet

ABOUT 2,500 accountants from all over the country are in town for their annual convention.

The city was chosen as venue of the 63rd convention involving the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants (Picpa), which is held in the annual advertising congress and other major events in the country's largest basin.

Christian Lanuza, Picpa senior director, said during the three-day convention, the Picpa also plans to discuss issues such as the new wave of changes in the international finance market, operations and wealth management, corporate quantitative finance and the role of the institution in combating climate change, among others. Efraim Aliac, Inquirer Mindanao

■ ALAMINOS CITY

Evils of shotguns

A MAN in a shotgun incident in his workplace in Tondo, Manila, is in critical condition after he was shot in the head by a co-worker in this city, police said.

Police said the suspect fired upon the victim when the latter got too drunk and played with the gun that accidentally went off, hitting the victim in the stomach.

The suspect's mother was one of 10 barangay chiefs in this city who received shotguns from the provincial government.

The city has 30 villages but the other village heads declined to get the shotguns after city officials approved an ordinance requesting the provincial government to give the weapons to the city police instead.

Mayor Hermon Hagonoy said was one of the town mayors city officials in Pangasinan who refused the arming of the barangay captains, saying the city was peaceful and there was no need for shotguns. Yolanda Sotelo, Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ BAGUIO CITY

Motorcyclist dead

A SPEEDING BMW-head bus, 22, when he lost control of his motorcycle while negotiating a curve on Marcos Highway in Tuba, Benguet.

James Dumlao, 22, of Sitio Pinsaguyo-Bakiki here, died of massive injuries to the head and other parts of the body before he reached the hospital here, according to SPO4 Hegalio Tandang of the Tuba police. Elmar Robbie Obejero, Inquirer Northern Luzon

■ TACLOBAN CITY

Alert up for dengue

THE CITY health office here renewed calls for vigilance against the possible rise of dengue cases cited in the city as a 6-year-old boy died of the disease last week.

The death of Ilet boy, a doctor's son, brought the number of fatalities due to dengue to three for the year. Tacloban City recorded more than 300 cases last year. Jerry S. Eslabra, Inquirer Visayas

■ CEBU CITY

Ex-politician held

POLICE detained briefly a former politician after he accosted Cebu Gov. Gwendolyn Garcia on Sunday morning while the governor shook hands with the crowd attending the anniversary of the province's patron saint in Naga, Cebu.

Garcia only smiled as Arsenio Antonio Remme, who earlier also governor in 2001, held and gently escorted him out of the area. Jhunnex Napallacan, Inquirer Visayas

■ ZAMBOANGA CITY

Girl, 9, abducted

A DAY before the military and police call to devise effective approaches to prevent kidnapping incidents, a 9-year-old girl was abducted in Lantapan City on Wednesday night.

Philippine National Police Chief Director General Jesus Verzosa was expected to activate the Directorate on Integrated Police Operations (DIPO) Mindanao Headquarters on Thursday.

And while the conference pushed through at the Garden Orchid Hotel, police and military are pursuing four suspects who kidnapped Maria Fatima Lorenzo.

Senior Insp. Christopher Fuentebella, Lantapan police chief, denied it was a case of kidnapping, saying "it's still a family matter." "We will not have the number for the moment until we find out if [Lorenzo] is safe," Julie E. Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao

SBMA says tree-cutting report for casino 'speculation'

LUBIC BAY FREEPORT—THE LUBIC Bay Metropolitan Authority would prevent trees inside the free port and would enlist all efforts to save them until the development of a $120-million hotel-casino, a top SBMA official said.

"We won't stand for the cutting of trees. Definitely, we won't allow it," said SBMA Administrator Armand Arreza.

He said news reports saying the project would destroy some 200 trees in the area, however, somehow are mere speculations.

The Korean-backed project, he said, is "a critical tool and measure in Subic's bid to attract more foreign tourists."

Arreza said the SBMA has asked the project proponent, Grand Utopia Inc., that the trees should be saved and incorporated in the development plans.

Architect and urban planner Felino Palafox Jr. had said that he was initially tapped by Grand Utopia to design the project but he backed out when he found out that the management intended to cut trees.

Arreza said the trees were still intact and all that Grand Utopia had done was to have the trees tied to prevent the members of town in preparation for "balling" or transplanting.

"It's pure speculation that 200 trees will be destroyed because, in fact, Grand Utopia has already applied for a permit to fell the trees," he said.

"It's true that because of the density of the trees at the mini-golf course, the ecology center has classified that part of the site as an urban jungle. But it's still within the commercial zone where development is allowed," he said.

He said the area, the former site of a mini-golf course built by the United States Navy, has been classified under SBMA zoning regulations as a commercial area.

"That is why the recommendation from the ecology [center] was to incorporate the trees in the development plans, so if that [cut] be possible, to build the town and transfer them to a new location," Arreza said.

He said the Grand Utopia project, which will be known as the Condo-Casino and Hotel Resort, is considered critical to the free port as it could attract more foreign tourists in the growing number of holiday destinations in Subic.

The hotel will be located near Subic's Mira Pier, which is being developed by cruise lines as a passenger terminal for cruise ships, it was learned.

Arreza said the casino and hotel project is expected to employ more than 5,000 workers once it is completed in two years. Rebecca Geronaga, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Police see link between 2 raids on bus terminals

LEGAZPI, Albay—Police have started looking for the "common denominator" to the burning of the Victory Liner buses in this town on Wednesday night and the bombing of a bus in the campsite's terminal in Quezon City on Saturday night to establish if the groups in people behind the attacks.

Chief Insp. Leopoldo Bataoil, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), arrived here on Friday to evaluate and compare pieces of evidence with Chief Insp. Isidro Tomas, Bicol police director, on the Legazpi and Quezon City attacks.

Bataoil said their investigators have yet to establish a group behind these attacks.

Quezon City

In Sitio Ilaya Victory Liner buses were burned by at least 20 men to the firm's terminal in Quezon City.

"We are looking at various angles. The motive could be [unsolved] or unsolved [and committed] by interested or disgruntled employees," Bataoil said.

Tomas said the police are looking at several angles, among them a labor dispute and extortion activities by the New People's Army or by criminal groups.

Bicolandia's cousin (We're digging)," he said.

He policemen were stationed where the suspects, who were pushed and kicked by the accused and the bystanders, fired at them. A bus conductor, who was sleeping inside one of the buses, suffered burns.

No comment

A representative of the bus company declined to comment on reports that disgruntled or terminated employees could be behind the attacks.

But Danny Hernandez, Victory Liner shop supervisor, said the company has been giving its employees all benefits required by law.

He said the firm does not dismiss employees without cause and follows all legal procedures in the termination of their services.

Board Member Alfonso Blanco, the bus company's legal counsel, said the damaged buses are around P500 million. Two of the buses were new and cost P7 million each while the others cost from P4 million to P5 million each, he said.

"This is an act of cowardice," he said in a telephone interview.

Gov. Antonio Espino Jr. condemned the attack, saying this was an "unconscionable and arrogant display of terrorism, destabilizing the normal flow of economic activities."

"Whatever is behind this dastardly act will not escape the long arm of the law. Sooner than later, the law enforcement authorities will bring to the bar of justice the members of [this] terrorist gang," he said in a statement.

Bataoil, former Bicol police director and Pangasinan police director, assured the bus company and police-mates that the Philippine National Police would provide them financial assistance.

On Thursday Tomas gave the security policemen, who are being treated at the Region 5 Medical Center in Daraga, Cagayan, Inquirer Bicol Bureau

SOME of the burned Victory Liner buses in their terminal in Legazpi, Pangasinan.
AFP PHOTO/ROMEO RANOCO

INQUIRER Visayas

Read Along moves adults into action

By Carla P. Gomez
Reporter/City

ENCOURAGED MOVIE director Peque Gallaga was deeply moved by the experience.

"I think education is very powerful when it goes beyond conditional boundaries," he said after reading to 40+ children, some of them seriously ill, at Carmel College, a school in Talomo City in Negros Occidental.

Gallaga was the celebrity reader at the launching of the Inquirer Read Along sessions in the Visayas on Nov. 22.

The storytelling session broke down "walls" and brought smiles to the faces of even the most withdrawn children.

When his turn ended, John Richard Arcenas appeared aloof at the start as if he had built a thick wall around himself. Gallaga, however, "lost" him.

"But I think something touched him," he said, noting that the boy's body language softened in the succeeding sessions.

THE SUNTOWN kids listen excitedly to Rebolt Rodriguez. PHOTOS BY RED ALMAS

Children with cancer

Many of the youngsters are members of the Suntown Camp, a foundation that brings joy to children with cancer and other life-threatening illnesses, or have parents who are gravely ill, and renders them fun services. The foundation helped organize the Read Along.

"I thought I was just doing a community reading. I wasn't aware how deep and important it was," Gallaga said. "It was an honor to be part of the experience."

"I was so strongly affected. I'm glad I did not know I was reading to children with cancer or I would not have been able to read," he said.

Gallaga read the book "Whatever in the Sky" by Efren Mikey Ermita and illustrated by Jose Sy, a story about a grandmother who makes a parol and a hole in the sky and became a star.

"When I finished that story of the children I was reading to were sick, I realized why I was asked to read a book about coping with death," he said.

"The Inquirer Read Along showed us another vehicle of delivering even the most difficult messages about illness and death to our Suntown Camp kids to whom both situations are real and will be grim realities," Suntown Camp President Hilda Kilayko said.

"I felt both happy and sad at first. And, I felt with Sokrates. Good up to answer a question about the hospitalization and eventual death of the storybook's character in a very straightforward manner. Should the same have to live with this situation, I am sure the happy way he learned about illness and death in a read along will help ease that pain," Kilayko said.

The Inquirer had flown in professional reader Richard Rodriguez, and his high-energy and very entertaining style transported the children into another world through "Spelakua," written by Alice Mallari and illustrated by Leo Aglaua.

He also kept the children laughing as he read "Thwocky and Goony Graff," a Hansel-Norwegian fairy tale about three goats crossing a bridge, under which was a monstrous troll who wanted to eat them.

Senior Inquirer editor Ruth Navarra hosted the Read Along in the Visayas and kept the children reading.

Suntown will be organizing a training session for its volunteers so they could learn to read stories to the children like Rodriguez, Kilayko said. "If we have a pool of readers, we can tap them for Read-Along during our support group sessions and schedule them to read for children in hospitals," she added.

Dr. Alda Dayrit, Suntown Camp director, said: "The kids really loved the Inquirer Read Along session. They were so brave it was a struggle for tears. They adore Kuya Rich and they wish there will be another read along this Christmas."

"Some of the kids have never experienced someone reading a story to them at home so it was a new experience for them," Dayrit said.

It is something we can do during our support group sessions, he said.

Dr. Ada Arnaz, a Suntown volunteer, said the Inquirer Read Along was the first of its kind to be held. "It was a blast. We should start making it a regular activity. Education is still the way to go," she said.

Natalie Lorenz, who offered her Carmel College as venue, said she wanted to enthuse the children. "I saw in their faces how happy they were at the Read Along. They were completely enthralled."

And the children were likewise enthralled with her school. It was built like a gingerbread house filled with murals of scenes from storybooks and sculptures of fairytale characters scattered about in its English garden.

Tina Orbecido said her two daughters enjoyed the activity. "It further stirred their love for reading. The activity awakened my passion to once again be involved in outreach work," she said.

Ms. Erna Espina, who came to cover the event for a local cable channel, called it an "incredible experience." She added: "You forget all your problems when you see the joy in the faces of the children."

"The children had fun while learning," said another mother, Rodyn Hamilton.

"We were happy to see the children happy," said Levi Ybañez of Teleperformance, a call center company which gave out books and goodies to the children after the read along. Several other donors gave toys and food.

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DIVE TOURISM

'RP should recover 90% of lost marine resources'

By Irene R. Sino Cruz
Cebu City

ALTHOUGH THE PHILIPPINES HAS BEEN recognized as among the world's top dive destinations, it has not reached the bounty of tourism earnings because of the loss of its marine biodiversity, according to a top tourism official.

Only 10 percent of the country's marine resources remain, Tourism Undersecretary for Sports and Wellness Cynthia Carreon noted over the weekend. "We need to recover the 90 percent."

The Philippines has been ranked No. 2 dive destination worldwide, next only to Palau, Carreon said, and would stay the course as it is. Dive market would require tourism efforts to protect marine life.

She cited the need for concerted action from the government and the local communities to enable the Philippines to attract more dive tourists. But she noted that many coastal villages, including local government officials, don't yet to be aware of the economic benefits that marine preservation would generate.

"The local officials should know economically the residents in their areas are using destructive methods of fishing," Carreon said. Most of them lead and know aggressive in stopping illegal fishing, she added.

Preserving coral reefs

In particular, Carreon, who also heads the Philippine Commission on Sports and Wellness, pointed at the need to preserve the coral reefs as an important component of dive tourism.

Based on studies of popular dive sites in the Caribbean and western Atlantic region, Carreon said that the total economic benefits from coral reefs yearly ranged from $100,000 to $600,000 per square kilometer of reef. The both, she said, come from tourism and recreation.

The Caribbean study also found that the region's rich marine biodiversity attracted about 2.9 million divers in 2000 and supported about 120,000 small fishermen. Divers spent an average of $2,100 per stay, more than the regular tourist $1,200, Carreon said.

Dive markets

In the Philippines, the best dive sites include Mindoro and Moalboal in Cebu, Apo Island in Dauin, Negros Oriental. Carreon said the top dive markets included Korea, Japan and Taiwan, but the DOT has been conducting aggressive promotions in Europe.

A managing director of the dive company Sea Explorers told the Philippine star on condition that she not be named that divers would prefer to see its dive sites preserved.

Divers are willing to pay the fees imposed by the local municipalities of many dive sites, Martin Kaufmann said, but in return, they wanted to see that part of the amount would go to marine protection.

Northeastern Samar is slowdown in the global dive tourism market so only the best dive destinations will attract the tourists. "From medium to long term, I still believe that the Philippines has great potential as a dive destination," he said.

Taiwan recruiters want new rule waived

JOB RECRUITERS TO TAIWAN HAVE ASKED the government to exempt them from the new household service workers rule, saying the Philippines could miss out 20,000 potential emerging jobs in the island.

Jackson Gan, president of Filipino Manpower Agencies Accredited to Taiwan (FIL-MAT), said Taiwanese recruiters and companies were discouraged from hiring Filipinos because of the new rule, which eliminates placement fees and imposes a minimum of $400 monthly salary for workers.

Gan said the umbrella group has sent numerous appeals to the Department of Labor and Employment and to the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) to exempt recruiters placing workers in Taiwan from the HSW rules.

Gan said it was imperative that the government exempt them from the rules as the Taiwan Ministry of Labor has allocated a quota of 20,000 emerging jobs for Filipinos to offset the drop in Filipino factory workers. Khelsea L. Abrot

AWARDEE
Former Senate President Manny Villar shakes hands with President Macapagal-Arroyo during the 5th anniversary celebration of Biz News Asia. It was the first time the two leaders met since Villar was ousted as Senate president last week. Villar received the Biz News Asia Business Icon Gold Award. (BEN NOVEL)

Economic uncertainty has caused the number of riders of MRT, LRT 1 and 2 to skyrocket. Actual records from rail companies show staggering doubling of riders in the last quarter.

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Gov't to continue talks with MILF without Malaysia

THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONtinue peace efforts with Muslim separatists despite the withdrawal of Malaysian ceasefire monitors, chief peace negotiator Hermogenes Esperon said yesterday.

Esperon expressed his "profound gratitude" to Brunei, Libya and Japan for agreeing to extend their participation in the peace process.

"Malaysia's decision to suspend its participation in the IMT (International Monitoring Team), still sent down on force-making steps and means in preserving the resumption of the stalled peace talks," said Esperon.

His statement came after Malaysian Foreign Minister Rais Yatim said Malaysia would not renew its mandate in the ceasefire PhilippinesMILF when it expires on November 30.

Malaysian troops have made up the bulk of the small international monitoring team which has overseen a 2003 ceasefire between the Philippine government and separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Although the ceasefire generally still holds, fighting between government troops and factions of the heavily-armed, 12,000-strong MILF broke out in August after the Supreme Court suspended a draft accord which would have paved the way for a semi-autonomous Muslim state.

Since then, scores of people have died and more than half a million civilians have been displaced by the fighting in the south.

President Macapagal-Arroyo called off further talks with the rebels, saying dialogue would only resume when they had laid down their weapons.

Malaysia's contingent recently totaled 40 troops with a dozen personnel from Japan, Libya and Brunei.

Esperon said the Philippines "profusely thanks Malaysia for heading the International Monitoring Team for four years as well as for facilitating in the conduct of the peace talks."

Meanwhile, commenting on Malaysia's withdrawal, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement calling on the Philippine government and the MILF "to make efforts to break the deadlock with a flexible attitude and to resume the peace negotiations."

"The government of Japan has been concerned about the worsening situation" in the southern Philippines since the suspension of the draft accord, the statement added. AFP

26 RP sailors freed by pirates

PIRATES HAVE RELEASED A Greek freighter and her 25 Filipino crew off Somalia, the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

The captives released the Centauri late Thursday and the Filipinos aboard "are in good condition," Foreign Undersecretary Esteban Conejos said in a statement.

He did not say when the freighter was seized.

"The vessel is on its way to Mombasa, Kenya, to unload its cargo," Conejos said.

Manila is coordinating with the ship's owners for the return of the crew to the Philippines, he added.

The government said last week that 127 Filipino seamen were being held hostage aboard seven vessels hijacked by pirates off the Somalia coast this year.

They include 19 Filipinos among the 23 members crew of the Sirius super tanker hijacked that was seized on Saturday and is still being held by pirates. AFP

Local execs haggled with Bolante for higher kickbacks, says witness

Front page A1

gloria 5 each to inform them that there was a Department of Agriculture (DA) fertilizer fund, and that some 30 percent was allocated as their commission.

One of those officials, then Capiz Gov. Victorino Dennis, even remarked if the commission was 40 percent.

"Isn't that Joc-joc's [project]?" Buendia quoted Bermejo as telling him.

"Who's your host?" Bermejo said.I replied, 'It's Tess Aytona.' Then he told me, 'I'll call you later tonight. I'll call Joc-joc first," Buendia said.

He said Bermejo later talked to say that the three of them—Bermejo, Aytona and Buendia—should meet in Iloilo, and on reaching that "everything's okay, I have already talked to Joc-joc."

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT Joc-joc Bolante returns on Friday to the Senate for another hearing on the fertilizer fund scam but senators find him more evasive than ever. He's had a lot of practice, after all. AP, AFP

WHO-ME? Jose Barredo, an aide of the so-called Bolante "runner," testifies at the Senate but Bolante claims he has never met him. AFP

'He doesn't know me'

Barredo, who testified at the Senate inquiry into the fund scam in 2005, admitted that he had neither met nor known Bolante personally.

Asked to comment on Barredo's testimony, Bolante said: "There's nothing much to react [to]. He confirmed everything I said. He doesn't know me, he hasn't talked to me."

Bolante also said Bermejo had repeatedly denied on radio that he had ever talked or met with Barredo.

In a fight moment during the hearing, Barredo said he too had suffered a heart attack, and that he and Bolante had the same doctor.

This remark prompted Bolante to shake his head and elicited chuckles from the gallery.

Sen. Rodolfo Lanero was forced to call Barredo to testify at around 4:30 p.m., after Bolante indicated that he wanted to rest, first. Barredo and Aytona as the Office of the Ombudsman.

Aytona herself met with Sen. Richard Gordon, the blue ribbon committee chair, in around 11 a.m. yesterday and expressed willingness to appear at the inquiry accordingly to the person.

But she failed to make it to the hearing because she was afflicted with high blood pressure and had to be taken to the Philippine Heart Center for treatment.

"She did promise to attend. And I did tell her that she would be subjected to examination," Gordon said in the hearing.

He later ordered the issuance of a subpoena for Aytona.

Partners

According to Barredo, Aytona worked for Pelican Philippines Inc., which was authorized by Bolante to distribute fertilizer to local officials before the May 2004 presidential election.

Barredo testified that he and Aytona became partners in 1997, working together as the Department of Health's medicine distributor and later in the construction business.

He said that in 2004, he got a call from her regarding the distribution of the fertilizer fund.

Asked by Lanero if Aytona knew Bolante,

Barredo said: "If you Tess knows somebody, it was Jimmy Peale. He had a direct link to Malacañang."

He did not elaborate on Peale's identity.

Barredo said that during the negotiations with the proponents, he and Aytona would bring agreement forms and purchase orders, among other documents.

"O, Gov, see, how is DA fund of P5 million here," he recalled telling the governors. "Then they would ask me, 'How much do I get?' I would tell them, '30 percent.'"

"Some, including former Governor Bermejo, said they were expecting a 40-percent cut. But I would tell them it's only 30 percent," he said.

Barredo said the governors' commissions were deposited to his own account at a branch of the Land Bank of the Philippines in Capiz, where he lived.

He said that before the negotiations, he and Aytona would talk with the DA regional directors to inform them that "everything had been ironed" out at the DA central office.

List of proponents

Using the words "I" and "my office," Bolante admitted that he did more than download funds for the implementation of the so-called "farm inputs/farm implements" project that resulted in the fertilizer fund scam.

"In my best recollection, I have always consistently admitted that I prepared the list of the proponents. My office was the one that prepared the list of the proponents, and released the [subsidies] of sub-allottees and issuance of cash allotments through the regional executive directors," he said.

Bolante made the admission as soon DA regional directors testified against him, this time saying that they released funds to specific "recipients" identified by Bolante's office, which also notified them to get the funds there.

The former agriculture undersecretary was repeatedly warned by senators not to lie or evade their questions under pain of being put under Senate detention.

Those activities pertain to "authorized" and agricultural exemptions such as feeding programs, food distribution projects, sports fests and medical missions, among others, officers said.

Taking risks

General Pascua, 54, a security supervisor in a telecommunications company in Makati, recently signed up with the group. He said he was willing to join protest actions and mass movements staged by the organization.

"I would lose my job for joining a group run by [so-called enemies of the state]. Pareness told the inquiries over the phone. "But I believe in their cause and I want to help."

Dumalaga, who works as a chauffeur, also said he was not worried that his links to the group might be used against him because he was ready to fight for the rights of fellow Filipinos.

"I can help the group by following the law, by not accepting bribes or bribing anyone," he said in an interview.

Guns required

Because of the risks involved, Sanzhang Magdalo officers said signing up with them required guts.

"We will not allow any hand-raising activity because it breeds corruption so members will have to sustain the organization's programs through their personal funds," Pascua said.

He added that it was possible that members would be placed under police surveillance just like what happened to Villanueva' election campaign volunteers last year.

"But if they really believe in the group's cause, they won't mind the hassles," he said.

Joc-joc's ex-agri ...

Front page A1

Bachelor's degree in physical education from the University of the Philippines.

He said that after resigning from the Department of Agriculture (DA) in the aftermath of the nanovessel fund scam, he joined the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) as its vice president in December 2003.

"Physical education?" remembered Sen. Jinggoy Estrada upon knowing Poliquit's educational attainment.

Estrada later said: "You're too influential. You got appointed vice president and assistant secretary, and you have a PE degree."

Career path

Poliquit said he rose from the ranks and landed key posts at the DA and then at the GSIS. He said he was appointed to his current post by GSIS president Winston Garcia because of his managerial skills.

He served as staff assistant of then Natural Resources Minister Jose Leido in 1978, project manager of the National Resources Conservation Office four years later, chief of staff of the Environment Undersecretary for Research in 1987, project manager of the environment department's Debt for Nature Swap Program in 1989, and chief of staff of a congressman in 1995.

In 1997, he transferred to the National Agri-Business Corp. to become its assistant vice president for project management. In 2001, he became the chief of staff of Joselyn "Joc-joc" Bolante at the DA.

"I'm what I'm trying to say, your honor, [is] not really the ultra-educational attainment considered probably in the selection process, but also managing people and projects," Poliquit said.

The solons Estrada replied: "Mr. Poliquit, I don't want to belittle your qualifications. But it's quite ridiculous for you to reach your position as vice president of GSIS and assistant secretary with a BS in physical education."

Under questioning by Sen. Serafin Lacson, Poliquit said that at the GSIS, he was vice president for physical services.

"So that's quite clear. So my degree[,]" he said, eliciting laughter from the gallery.

Poliquit said that at his post, he was in charge of maintaining the GSIS building, including managing the motor pool and security, and repairing leaks and air-conditioning units, among others.

"So you're in charge of air-conditioner units? Airbase," then Senator said Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the blue-ribbon committee.

Poliquit answered in the affirmative.

"So you're to blame for the freezing cold here in the building? It's not cold you store anymore in here," Gordon said. (The Senate is renting the other half of the GSIS building.)

Said a chuckling Poliquit: "We'll keep it here then."

But Gordon insisted he should remain cold anyway.

"Stored, sir," the witness said.

Funding endorser

Poliquit was among the DA officials recommended by the Senate for prosecution by the Office of the Ombudsman after conducting its first inquiry into the fertilizer fund scam in 2005.

At the DA's assistant secretary for field operations, Poliquit said he endorsed requests for funding in connection with the "Sagip Saka" project to the department's undersecretary for finance, administration and undersecretary for finance.

"All have authority to disapprove or approve funding," he said.

Poliquit repeatedly denied to Lacson that he had a hand in preparing and later changing the list of the proponents.

Lacson had asked the question in relation to the Commission on Audit's earlier finding that the beneficiaries of the project were different from the proponents in the original list.

"I will point to you, you're lying like your boss Bolante[,]" Lacson told Poliquit. With a report from *Christine O. Avendaño*

Noise barrage ...

Front page A1

urged motorists to blow their horns in a 30-minute noise barrage on the corner of Ayala Avenue and Paseo de Roxas in Makati City.

At about 6 p.m., their numbers peaked, effectively blocking traffic in the area.

They used this high-profile means if only to arouse people to write Senate Pilipino, especially now that they are heavily abusing power. Mistap-lumpas na [they don't even bother to hide it]," said one of the leaders' protégés, Rodolfo "Boy" Lozada, a private labor consultant to the unregulated 3,629-million National Broadband Network contract.

Former gov't officials

Also in the crowd were members of the Senate Senior Government Officials Club, a group of some 80 ex-Cabinet members from current and past administrations who had banded together to add to the voices critical of the ruinous presidency.

Then hobbled Pulgarcito's frontman, Jr., Brendan Eden, Imelda Marcos, Bernadita Ople and Jude Habacon.

Police kept a respectful distance from the throng that included Makati City Mayor and declared presidential aspirant Jejomar Binay as well as representatives of the city's Barangay League who were brought in the site on government vehicles.

In his personal capacity

Alberto A. Lim, executive director of the Makati Business Club, said it was unclear who proposed to make the noise barrage a weekly affair, noting that last night's action was "a good start."

But Lim was quick to clarify that he took part in yesterday's noise barrage in his personal capacity.

"I was tasked to apply for the permit from City Hall," he said. "I am not representing the MBC. Although it is not against anyone [Charter change]."

Lim added that he did not have time to inform the MBC board of directors about yesterday's activity, but said he would not be surprised if the group would back the noise barrage.

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Weekly activity

Black and White Movement convener Leah Navarro declared the boycott, noise barrage a success, noting how it also served to be fun and festive.

"It was a happy caucus, many citizens blew their horns," Navarro said. "So many surveys have shown, more and more people are voicing their disapproval of Chacha change."

She said the noise barrage will be a weekly activity that will be held in different venues "for the fight goes on."

"It seems to be unclear to many people that there is a constitutional assembly is convened, they could go to any amendment to the basic law including ways for those in power to remain in office," Navarro stressed.

She said another noise barrage would be held in front of Ateneo de Manila University on Katipunan Avenue, Quezon City on Dec. 2 and that protesters would go back to Ayala Avenue every Saturday.

"This involves various interest groups that we will refer to as 'Bantas,'" said Navarro, referring to the movement that Lozada interested when he blew the whistle on NBN scandal.

Lozada's 46th birthday

Lozada himself, along with some from his faith, took part in the noise barrage which also served as an advanced birthday party for him.

A smaller group of about 30 people who stayed as late as 6:30 p.m. sang "Happy Birthday" to Lozada, who turns 46 today.

When asked what he thought about former House Speaker Jose de Venecia's plan to file a resolution on the NBN deal, Lozada said he was thankful although the politician should have spoken earlier when it occurred.

One year later, Magdalo recruits ...

Front page A1

looking for civilian recruits to join their newly launched volunteer group, Sanzhang Magdalo.

With time, they are using the Internet, tapping popular social networking sites such as Friendster and Facebook, to recruit supporters aged 18 and above from across the country.

Chief civilian friends are running the new group's Friendster and Facebook accounts, said Marine Capt. Gary Alejano, president of Sanzhang Magdalo, speaking through long-term sources.

Alejano, together with Senior Navy Lt. (sg) Gen. Antonio Trillanes IV, Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and 17 other officers were placed in Camp Crame's maximum security facility following the botched Manila Peninsula takeover last year.

All of them face rebellion charges for last year's siege. Eleven have been charged with coup d'etat before the Makati Regional Trial Court for taking control of the Oakwood Premier Hotel in 2003.

Spreading the cause

"The purpose of launching this volunteers group is to propagate civilian members who believe in the cause and will continue to spread our cause," sources said, quoting Alejano.

Sanzhang Magdalo is an umbrella organization of the Magdalo Para sa Pagbabago, a national movement the officers founded to advocate the coconut levy governments.

Although the renegade soldiers have been in jail for almost a year, Alejano remained in their conviction that "the Filipinos deserve a better government."

Quoting Alejano, sources said the group thought of opening its doors to civilian members after volunteers who helped in the campaign of Trillanes in the May 2007 elections manifested their intention to continue their activities.

Thinking Pinoy

Among them was Ernesto Domingo, 32, an embassy chauffeur from Baguio. He was among Trillanes' campaign volunteers who immediately committed to the group when he heard it was accepting civilians.

Friendster and Facebook, the latest fads among the Filipino youth, became the fastest way to draw in members, said Air Force 1st Lt. Billy Begas, acting secretary general, through confidential channels.

"We've just thinking Pinoy. Using them also is the to bring right now but this is just one way to recruit members," said another source, quoting Pascua.

An application form can be downloaded from both sites and printed out. Filled-out forms can be submitted to designated "area coordinators."

Three chores

A Baguio-based businessman in his 50s downloaded an application form from Friendster, filled it out and submitted it to his designated area coordinator.

Pascua shared that discussions with the inquirers but refused to identify their base number without his consent.

Aspiring members could also get the applications from directly from their coordinators, Pascua added.

An affidavit, according to Alejano is expected to fulfill three chores: To become a productive and law-abiding citizen (which includes paying taxes and obeying traffic rules); to observe its code of conduct; and to support the activities of the Magdalo.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
NEWS
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2008

Bishops, priests urged: Act now vs GMA

By Marlen Ramos

"RUNNING PRIEST" FATHER ROBERT REYES yesterday challenged Catholic bishops to follow the lead of seven bishops who openly called for the ouster of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"I challenge the bishops and the priests. This is an extremely corrupt government. Words are not enough. You must act," Reyes, who runs to promote his cultural causes, said.

He made the call on the eve of the first anniversary of the takeover by renegade soldiers of The Peninsula Manila hotel in Makati City in Nov. 29, 2007 and during the launch of the book he wrote about the incident.

Reyes was joined by some 20 individuals who went with their auxiliary officer now Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim and other rebel soldiers when they occupied the posh Makati hotel after walking out of their trial for rebellion.

Clad in T-shirts printed with the faces of Lim and Trillanes, the group distributed copies of Reyes' book and Lim's handwritten message to the media.

Trillanes' wife, Arlene, also showed up as the event held at site of the Ninoy Aquino monument on Ayala Avenue, but she refused to talk with the media.

Reyes said prosecutors should ignore hoods when they demonstrate their frustrations over the recent junking by Congress of the impeachment complaint lodged against the President.

Instead, he said, people should flock to the Manila Cathedral and join the Catholic Church a chance to lead "a real moral revolution."

"Manila Cathedral may be a symbol for the Church to renew its moral obligation because the Church has been silenced and so corrupted by this government," he said.

Reyes said rioters in the light of hierarchy of the Catholic Church should overcome their fear of sacrificing their lives for the country.

"We should not be afraid of being jailed or being killed. We have our vow of celibacy so we can drink freely. Sadly, most of the bishops and priests have become cowards," he said.

"This is the time to die for the country. Ninoy (the late Sen. Benigno Aquino Jr.) was right when he said that the Filipino is worth dying for. Filipinos who are not afraid to die should go to the streets."

Fr. Robert: Manila Pen and beyond

By Marlen Ramos

IT WAS PAST 7 PM OF NOV. 28, 2007 when Father Robert Reyes received a call from his friend Jimmy Regalado.

Regalado, a member of Catholic bishops-led Ellsberg Multi-Sensory Encounter (EMEC), requested him to celebrate Mass the next day at the Ninoy Aquino Monument on Ayala Avenue in Makati City.

The Mass, he told Reyes, was in preparation for a big mobilization against President Macapagal-Arroyo on Nov. 30, the 11th anniversary of Andres Bonifacio.

Reyes was reluctant to give in to his friend's request, as he had wanted to spend more time with his parents before he flies back to Hong Kong where he works as a researcher for the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

But Reyes never had the chance to say a firm because of a heavy downpour.

Around 11 a.m., he again received a call from Regalado, this time asking him to lead a march from the monument to the nearby The Peninsula Manila hotel.

He said he was also asked to fetch bishops Bishop Broderick Pabillo Xavier Labayen from the hotel.

By then, Reyes was already informed that Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV and Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim had walked out of their trial from the Makati City Hall.

"But I did not have any idea about the scenario," Reyes says.

A few hours later, Reyes would be arrested along with Lobayen, Trillanes, Lim and the other rebel soldiers who holed up inside the posh hotel to dramatize their disgust over Ms. Arroyo's government.

Prison journal

Reyes, known as the running priest for holding morning sermon to promote his advocacies, spent the next 15 days inside the detention cell in Camp Crame together with 30 other individuals who were accused of other police and military units decided to forcibly take them out of the hotel.

In his effort to put music to his experience, Reyes chronicled his experiences behind bars on a small notebook he brought before his arrest.

Yesterday—on the eve of what he described as the longest day of his life—Reyes launched the book containing the journal he had kept while in detention.

Published by AHRC, the 117-page "FR. ONE—Manila Pen and Beyond" also tackled the "reflections" of those who shared the detention cell with him—Lim, Trillanes, former University of the Philippines president Francisco Nemenzo, lawyer Argee Guevarra and journalist Sonnara Tia Lacanilao.

Reyes said rushing up with the book in time for the event's first anniversary was a miracle.

The book, he said, was finished in just one month.

"I was in Hong Kong most of the time so I had to transfer my diary all by myself and just e-mail to the printing house. I wrote the last part when I was vacationing in Seattle, USA with my sister," he said during the book launching held at the same memorial where he led the march to the Manila Bay.

According to Reyes, his incarceration had helped him strengthen his conviction about being an activist priest and a human rights advocate.

"The experience of imprisonment purifies your motivation. You realize why you do what you do and how far you want to go with your sacrifices," he told the bayan.

He added: "My prison experience confirmed the reason why I'm a priest. Didn't I join priesthood just to spread a considerable life inside my parish? Or was it because I wanted to follow what God intended for me?"

Aplus METRO

MARITHÉ FRANÇOIS GIRBAUD SALE

Taxi plate in coed's abduction traced

Records: It's registered to jeepney involved in other road accidents

By Nancy C. Carvajal

THE PLATE NUMBER TWC 897 ATTACHED TO the taxi involved in the botched coed abduction and robbery over the weekend, is registered to a passenger jeepney which was linked to various vehicular accidents, based on court documents obtained by the Inquirer.

The documents showed that the passenger jeepney owned by Avelardo Medes and Wilma Pena of Bgy. 6, Quezon City, was involved in a traffic accident in June 2007.

The jeepney's driver identified in the documents was a certain Reginaldo Medes Abbu, 37, of Canlusa Street, Barangay Tora, Quezon City.

Abbu, according to the documents, had been previously involved in a traffic incident in Quezon City on Feb. 10, 1998 and was ordered by Arthur O. Malabaguio (for reckless imprudence resulting in damage to property with a recommended bail of P1,500 in relation to a traffic accident in 1998.

In the documents, Abbu and the Pena couple admitted responsibility on the traffic accident and promised to pay the damages, but had failed to honor the agreement.

Quezon City Police District Director Senior Supt. Magnaye Eduardo said the police have been alerted to be on the lookout for any vehicle sporting the plate number.

"Whenever and whatever vehicle

A must-attend seminar for land hunters, investors & land owners!
REAL ESTATE VALUES:
HOW, WHY AND WHEN THEY GO UP OR DOWN
URBAN INSTITUTE OF REAL ESTATE

Cops blame road rage on death of businesswoman

By Marcy C. Carvajal

THE BUSINESSWOMAN WHO was gunned down inside her car on Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City, on Monday night was not ambushed but was killed as a result of traffic altercation.

Supt. Marvelous Policarpio, homicide section chief of the Quezon City Police District, made the clarification yesterday after a witness of the incident surfaced, he said.

"It was not an ambush but a traffic altercation according to a new witness that came forward and narrated the incident," Policarpio said.

Except for the clarification, however, Policarpio did not offer new information or details on the case, particularly on how the traffic altercation happened.

Wantanida Diaoni, 43, sustained gunshot wounds on the head and hands and was declared dead on arrival at Malvar General Hospital after she and her companion were shot by still unidentified gunmen.

Her companion, identified as Leyne Gentilmo, was also hurt but survived the shooting.

Initial police report said that Diaoni and her companions were ambushed on the eve of the victim's departure for the United States apparently to escape from death threats.

THIS IS HOW IT'S DONE
Policewomen of San Juan show the proper technique of arresting a suspect during a drill Friday at the launching of the police-women mobile patrol unit in Greenhills, San Juan. ALEX LIGAYA

Killing inside Islamic Center baffles cops

By Jeannette I. Andrade

HOMICIDE INVESTIGATORS OF the Manila Police District (MPD) were left with only two empty shells as leads in the gunman who killed Isan Thursday afternoon a 60-year-old man inside the Islamic Center in Quiapo, Manila.

This developed after the examination of the victim allegedly cleaned up the crime scene, police said.

Homicide section and Scene of the Crime Officer (SOCO) personnel shouldn't enter a crime scene with no body and no shoes at unit 9B at the 3rd floor of the Islamic Center in Quiapo, where they were supposed to have found Ibrahim Nur Amin who was shot to death.

Senior INSP. Joseph Kalagayan and SPO2 Danilo Hilad went to the crime scene, they noted in their report that "the victim's shoes immediately brought by his relatives as the Muslim custom as part of their tradition and belief."

They recovered only two empty shells from a .45 caliber pistol.

Initial reports from the MPD Sta. Mesa police station 9 recorded that the shooting happened at around 3 p.m. Thursday, inside Amin's unit, where the victim allegedly died from two bullet wounds in the chest and left arm, police said.

Homicide investigators said that even if two empty shells were found, they will not say anything they were fired by Amin's assailants.

Nevertheless, police investigators are still conducting follow-up operations to locate possible witnesses to the shooting.

Role of youth in AIDS prevention stressed in forum

By Julie M. Aurelio

YOUNG PEOPLE CAN ALSO DO their share in addressing the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus and be part of the solution, advocates said yesterday.

Over 70 youth participants gathered in Quezon City yesterday to highlight the National Young People's Planning Session to put together their own plan of action to address the HIV problem.

In an interview, Irene Pelilian, president of Kandirjan Pinoy (Gen Inc., one of the forum's sponsors, noted that children and young people are one of the most vulnerable to the HIV virus.

"The most critical population in this population because this is the age when they begin to be more adventurous ... Many of their dreams may not be fulfilled because of HIV," she said yesterday.

The two-day forum gathered young people aged 15 to 24 from all over the country to put their views on HIV and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, and what they can do to address it.

It is sponsored by the Council for the Welfare of Children's Committee on Children and HIV and AIDS, United Nations Children's Fund, Landbank Foundation Inc., and the Philippine National AIDS Council.

The activity is in support of the country's fourth AIDS Medium Term Plan from 2005 to 2010, which aims to prevent the further spread of HIV and reduce its impacts on people, families and communities.

Pelilian said young Filipinos have a high awareness of HIV and AIDS, but points out that this knowledge needs to be translated into actual practice or life skills to help prevent the spread of HIV.

"There's a need to continue this awareness and be able to influence their decisions in life," she added.

She cited "vigor" in the country's AIDS registry which reflect a rising trend in the incidence of HIV infections each month.

Pelilian explained that though the country has a relatively low AIDS prevalence, the cases have tripled each month since 2008.

"What is important now is that people realize that young people and children can also be part of the solution through critical and meaningful discussions such as this," she added.

For his part, Andrei Caballes, 22, of the Kabataang Galang sa Kaibigang Pamamahay believes young adults like him are not worldless when it comes to sensitive issues like AIDS.

He counseled that some older generations consider the youth as such because of the image of some school dropouts, young people who are hooked on drugs, and incidents of teenage pregnancies.

"I know some people think that the youth are no longer the hope of the nation, but those are some things we can do to help," Caballes said.

"We want to change the way others view us young people. That we are not sleeping on that issue," Caballes added in Filipino.

Speedy medical aid for Valenzuela folk

By Beverly T. Nadrilad

VALENZUELA CITY RESIDENTS WHO need emergency medical care now only have to call their barangay offices and report the incident or problem and they will be sent their way to the hospital.

The city government of Valenzuela has turned over 27 ambulance units to its 32 barangays in response to requests for basic medical assistance from the local government.

Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian said yesterday during the turnover rites that some P21.7 million was released from the city coffers to finance all the ambulance fleet.

"It is important that barangays are equipped to serve. The services of the city start with the barangay. They are the first ones that residents call to for help, not the councilors, not the mayor," he said.

According to Gatchalian, the city funded the ambulance fleet in order to develop the healthcare services delivered by the city government through its barangays.

Ambulance units chartered from private medical care providers usually cost between P4,000 to P5,000.

The 27 ambulances were funded by the City Development Fund of 2008, which comprises 20 percent of the city's total budget.

Each ambulance has a portable medical oxygen tank, statewide type blood pressure apparatus, antishog inhaler and pedia combination manual resuscitator, minor surgical kit, first aid kit, and a stretcher with safety strap.

Mumbai police like ours

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT was caught with its pants down in the Mumbai terrorist carnage and mayhem.

Indian police were like headless chickens dealing with the simultaneous attacks on many places in India's business center, or equivalent of Makati City.

I heard a woman resident complaining over CNN of the absence of police in some places under attack by militants.

She asked the presence of journalists in all beleaguered areas as if, she said, media could repel the attacks.

The Indian woman's comment reminds us of our obligations to protect who get to the scene of trouble much ahead of the police or military.

* * *

The inefficiency of the Indian police and military in dealing with the terrorists also reminds us of our police and military.

The attack on 26 Intelligence Bde Sgt. Jes Vinoya, 30, and Pfc. Jaime Jubo, 21, in the early 1990s. The take-over by Moro rebels of Mamasapano, Maguindanao, in the early '90s. The helplessness or defeat of the police at the hands of communist New People's Army (NPA) rebels who randomly attack towns.

All the above-cited incidents show the inefficiency of our police and military in handling off attacks by terrorists and lawless elements on our towns and cities.

I was tempted to laugh at the laughing Indian police and military while watching CNN, but then it occurred to me we have the same laughing cops and soldiers here at home.

* * *

The government must now prepare for a terrorist and murderous rampage attacks in big urban areas like the one experienced by Mumbai.

The terrorists in the Mumbai attacks seemed to drive home the message that they can wreak havoc on a government at war with imbecility groups like our Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) or the Abu Sayyaf.

India and the Philippines have something in common: both have significant Muslim populations that have the sympathy of neighboring Muslim countries.

If India has neighboring Pakistan as a source of Muslim terrorists, we have Malaysia and Indonesia from whose Jemaah Islamiyah terrorists, who roam our local midland Muslims, come from.

Our government must not be ashamed to seek help from the United States, Japan and Australia in asking for materials and personnel trained to deal with terrorism.

First World countries like the US, Japan and Australia are there to help us global phenomenon.

The war on terrorists has no borders.

* * *

Binoytoe Mantapia-Guadamosa of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) regional office based in Cagayan de Oro City refuses to vacate his post despite an order from his bosses in Manila.

Guadamosa has received an order by BIR Commissioner Sixto Esguerra ordering him to his post.

Guadamosa has been the subject of complaints of extortion from big business firms in Cagayan de Oro.

Guadamosa probably thinks that his post is co-terminus with that of President Gloria's.

Killing inside Islamic Center baffles cops

By Jeannette I. Andrade

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Nevertheless, police investigators are still conducting follow-up operations to locate possible witnesses to the shooting.

MetroBriefs

P113M Lotto jackpot

IT WILL be a happy Christmas for the lucky bettor who scored with tomorrow night's P113M Super Lotto 6/49 draw of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office said if experts the jackpot to reach P113 million. In a phone interview, spokesperson Dr. Larry Cadiz said they are looking to increased betting sales over the weekend to spur the jackpot higher. "That estimate of P113 million to P113 million is very conservative. We are confident that this amount will be surpassed rather than what we are expecting," he told the business yesterday. No one won Thursday night's jackpot of P102,522,782. The winning combination three was 29-10-40-08-28-42.

Julie Aurelio

Pinoy Rodeo at UP Diliman

AS PART of the centennial anniversary of the UP System, a Pinoy Rodeo will be held today (Nov. 29) at the College of Fine Arts grounds (formerly College of Veterinary Medicine). Expected to participate are student rodeo teams from the Central Luzon State University, De La Salle-Araneta University, Carlos Hilado Memorial State College, and UP Los Baños. An exhibition will be the participation of UP-LB student rodeo teams. The old competitors in the 50's will see action as they morph it up to any of an exhibition in calf lassoing, calling down cattle, calf wrestling, and bronc-mare equestrian. A bare dance will follow the rodeo with live bands to be provided by San Miguel Corp. as one of the sponsors of the affair. The other sponsors are the Office of the Chancellory, DA, and Bureau of Agricultural Research, DA.

Cop in clay case hunted

POLICEMEN are hunting down a colleague who allegedly gunned down two men over a misunderstanding in Las Piñas City on Thursday, police said yesterday. PO3 Lauren Arriola, assigned at Police Community Precinct 4 of Las Piñas police station, went into hiding after he reportedly shot dead Rhodelmar Ignacio, 33, and his brother Jayomar, 17. Senior Supt. Amando Dillon Empino, city police chief, said Llanglanduf the victims at close range at the height of a verbal squabble after the cop blamed the brothers had filed a complaint against him for violence on an earlier case involving them.

Marlon Ramos

Indiscriminate shooting

A 17-YEAR-OLD boy was hurt when three persons, including two policeman drivers and a teenager, allegedly fired guns indiscriminately at their colleagues before dawn yesterday in Manila. The victim, whose name is withheld because of his minor age, of Magsaysay Street in Tondo, sustained a bullet wound in the left leg and was brought to the Jose Reyes Memorial Medical Center for treatment. His neighbors and suspects Marvin Galeta, 21; Britt Rosas, 25; and a 40-year-old alleged cohort were able to flee after the incident. Reports from the Manila Police District (MPD) Station, Tondo said the 3 revealed that the shooting happened at around 1:55 a.m. along Magsaysay Street near the corner of Antonio Street in Tondo.

Jeannette I. Andrade

Taxi plate in coed's ...

From page 10

so the plate number is attained, in driver would be taken in for investigation," Candela said.

He added that operatives of the driver's anti-carnapping unit that scans the whole city has the plate number.

He also explained that switching of plate numbers on vehicles used in criminal activities is commonly done by perpetrators to mislead investigators.

"If the reference's scenario developed the investigation, but does not happen it is anyway," he assured.

Last Saturday before dawn, Arlene (not her real name), a 16-year-old University of Santo Tomas student, underwent a harrowing experience when she noticed a RUL 690 cab sporting the plate number in going home.

She claims home late after attending a school activity. Upon reaching her house in Sta. Mesa Heights, Quezon City, Arlene agreed with the taxi driver after the latter refused to give her change for a P1,000 bill she gave for her fare.

When Arlene's mother tried to ask help from barangay watchmen, the driver sped off with his taxi still inside.

She escaped by jumping off the moving taxi along Bolivo Street and sustained multiple cuts and bruises on her chin, knee, face and foot in the process.

The taxi driver is now the subject of a police manhunt ordered by Candela.

Did you know

ABOUT 40 PERCENT OF Metro Manila youth aged 15 to 24 approved men having no-strings marriage, but only about 30 percent approve of women engaging in premarital sex, the 2002 Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study showed.

VEHICULAR ACCIDENT
An Isuzu 6-tilley Vehicle has smashed along Osmeña Highway in Manila after hitting the back of a dump truck. Police said the driver of the van, who remained unidentified as of press time, was allegedly under the influence of liquor.

EU accuses drug firms of blocking cheaper generics

Court OKs mercy killing for first time in S. Korea

SEOUL—A COURT ON FRIDAY APPROVED a request for euthanasia for the first time in South Korea, telling doctors to take a brain-dead woman off life support at her family's request.

The Seoul Western District Court ordered doctors and ventilator salesmen to withdraw from the 75-year-old woman identified only as Kim, saying she has no chance of recovery.

The landmark ruling acknowledged an individual's right to die but also first time here, but rekindled debate on euthanasia.

The woman's four home-stay forms of assisted suicide and were first reported in a suspicious hours brain-dead patients in another.

Kim was declared brain dead at Seoul's Severance Hospital in February after she sustained brain damage and fell into a coma while undergoing a lung examination.

Three months later her children filed a court petition after the hospital rejected their request that she be allowed to die in peace and with dignity.

The family claimed that extending Kim's life using medical devices would prolong her "painful and meaningless" existence. /AFP

WorldBriefs

Japan ending military involvement in Iraq

TOKYO—Japan is ending its military involvement in Iraq, announcing on Friday the withdrawal of small force mission that flies supplies into the country in support of US-led forces. The announcement, which comes a day after Iraq's parliament approved a deal on agreement paving the way for US forces to withdraw by 2011, ends and Tokyo's military involvement in Iraq long dogged by accusations that it breached the pacifist constitution. Reuters

UN reports that Taliban are stockpiling opium

UNITED NATIONS—Afghanistan has produced so much opium in recent years that the Taliban are cutting back poppy cultivation and stockpiling rare opium that will help support profits and preserve a cornerstone of financing for the insurgency, Antonio Maria Costa, the head of the UN drug-control office, says. Costa made his remarks in reports last week as his office prepared to release its latest survey of Afghanistan's opium crop. Issued Thursday, it showed that poppy cultivation had retreated in much of the country and was overwhelmingly concentrated in the seven of 34 provinces where the insurgency remains strong, most of those in the south. NYT

China's first homegrown jet makes maiden flight

SHENYANG, China—China's first fully homegrown commercial aircraft, the ARJ-21, successfully made its maiden flight on Friday, a key step in the country's ambitious aviation program. Shortly after takeoff in the region made Friday a good opportunity to go ahead, and the test flight was successful, said an official with the Aviation Industry Corp. of China, Wu Kangfeng, or "Flying Phoenix," was produced at the Shanghai Aircraft Manufacturing Factory, a unit of AVIC. The jet, meant for regional flights, is designed to carry 70-110 passengers and have a flight range of 3,000 kilometers. AP

S. Korea train makes last trip to North

SEOUL, South Korea—A South Korean cargo train chugged its way across the heavily fortified border into North Korea on Friday for what may be its last run, with the North putting an end to the historic railroad that could reopen the reconciliation between the two Koreas. All sides share Seoul's conservative President Lee Myung-bak assumed office in February and made a series of moves that upset Pyongyang. The rail service—launched a year ago for the first time in more than half a century—was one of the prominent fruits of a decade of reconciliation efforts. AP

US retailers offer mind-bending discounts

BLACK FRIDAY, long the Super Bowl of shopping, is at hand, but it may have become nearly irrelevant. Check out the deals that were already on offer earlier this week: Diamond earrings at Macy's were dropped to $249 from $700. A Marc Jacobs bag at Saks, originally $995, went to $349.40. And the rave, a Ted Baker suit at Lord & Taylor was selling not for the usual $895, but for $299.99. Such crazy prices are a sign of the times, and analysts expect many more such deals during one of the toughest holiday seasons in decades. In fact, retailers have had so many early "door-busters"—pre-shopping deals usually reserved for Black Friday—that "it's almost not necessary to get up at 5 in the morning," said Bill Dreher, a senior retailing analyst with Deutsche Bank Securities. The Toys "R" Us chief plans the diagnosis this country on its history and Friday with 66 percent more doorbusters than last year. Other retailers are promising that their deals will be even more enticing—with Wal-Mart, for instance, promising large flat panel televisions for less than $400. NYT

BRUSSELS/LONDON—EUROPEAN drug companies are delaying or blocking the entry of cheaper generic medicines, pushing up bills for taxpayers and reducing the incentive for innovation, a hard-hitting EU report said on Friday.

Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes said preliminary results of a year-long probe showed competition in the pharmaceuticals industry did not work as well as it should.

Practices such as multiple patent applications for the same drug, litigation and settlements deals that delayed generics deprived European healthcare providers of some three billion euros ($3.9 billion) in potential cost savings between 2000 and 2007, the report estimated.

"Market entry of generic companies and the development of new and more affordable medicines is sometimes blocked or delayed, at significant cost to healthcare systems, consumers and taxpayers," Kroes said.

"It is still early days, but the commission will not hesitate to open antitrust cases against companies where there are indications that the antitrust rules may have been breached."

The attack from the commission—the European Union's executive arm—adds to pressure on a heavily-geared global drugs industry which faces loss of patent protection on some of its best-selling products over the next four years.

The industry also faces major challenges in the United States, where increasing President Barack Obama is expected to seek ways to bring down costs as he tries to extend healthcare coverage to millions of uninsured Americans.

Kroes has the powers to impose hefty fines on drug makers if she finds they have engaged in unfair practices.

Such action has already been taken in the past, with AstraZeneca Plc fined 60 million euros in 2005 for blocking cheaper rivals to its heartburn and ulcer pill Losec.

Kroes kicked off the sector investigations in January with a series of raids on members of brand-name and generic drugs, including AstraZeneca, GlaxoSmithKline Plc, Pfizer Inc, Merck & Co Inc and Sanofi-Aventis SA, as well as Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd. and Novartis AG's generics unit Sandoz.

There have also been a smaller number of raids involving mainly generic drug companies this week.

The commission said it had found documents during the inquiry which contained submissions from brand-name companies that they had tried to stop generics, and many examples of obstacles being placed in way of less expensive competitors.

In one case, an Irish firm 1,500 patents were filed for a single drug medicine, the commission said. There were also nearly 700 cases of reported patent litigation, lasting on average nearly three years, with generic firms ultimately prevailing in more than 60 percent.

There were also more than 200 settlement deals between brand-name and generic companies, of which more than 70 percent limited the entry of generics and provided for payments from the originator to the generic firms.

Furthermore, owners of original drugs often intervened in national procedures for the approval of generic medicines, resulting in typical delays of around four months.

Generic drug companies have long complained that they have trouble getting their products to market in Europe. Generics account for just over 40 percent of the market by volume in Europe, against more than 60 percent in the United States. Reuters

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The WORLD

Julie Lorene B. Ganzo

Iraq parliament approves US military pullout plan

BAGHDAD—IRAQ'S PARLIAMENT ON THURSDAY approved a landmark military pact that will see all US troops withdraw by the end of 2011, eight years after the invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein and plunged the country into chaos.

After 11 months of hard-nosed negotiations with Washington and a flurry of internal negotiations leading up to the vote, the pact was approved by 149 members of the 198 who attended the session of the 275-member assembly.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's Shiite-led government succeeded in corralling a considerable majority to support the bitterly agreement, including the Sunni bloc representing the country's Sunni and Kurdish minorities.

"This is a historic day for the great people of Iraq," Maliki said in a televised address after the parliamentary vote.

"We have achieved one of our most important accomplishments by signing an agreement for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Iraq, and restoring the sovereignty that we lost more than two decades ago," he said.

"[The agreement] ensures Iraq and its national sovereignty preserves its wealth, and returns it to the international community as a free country."

The agreement was approved by the Cabinet a week ago and is now virtually guaranteed to be ratified by Iraq's presidential council.

US President George W. Bush hailed parliament's approval of the "historic" agreement, saying in a statement that it "affirms the growth of Iraq's democracy and increasing ability to secure itself."

The measure would govern some 150,000 US troops stationed in over 400 bases when their UN mandate expires at the end of the year, giving the Iraqi government twin power over virtually all of their operations.

It marks a coming-of-age for Maliki's government, which drove a hard bargain with Washington, securing a number of concessions over nearly a year of tough negotiations.

The accord has still drawn fire from certain quarters, including followers of the hardline Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who rejected any agreement with the United States.

As the voting on the pact began, several hailed MPs peaceful rallies in a bid to hinder the vote, chanting "No, yes to Iraq... No, no, to the occupation," but the 30 members like failed to defend the agreement.

The vote came after a flurry of last-minute negotiations in which the main Sunni parties secured a package of political reforms from the government and a commitment to hold a referendum on the pact no later than July 30.

Should the Iraqi government decide to cancel the pact after the referendum, it would have to give Washington one year's notice, meaning that troops would be allowed to remain in the country only until the summer of 2010.

The international agreement will be binding on US presidential elections. Barack Obama, who has vowed since last year to withdraw all US troops at any time.

The pact was made possible in part by dramatic improvements in security over the past year, with US and Iraqi forces largely containing the violence and the chaos that erupted in the wake of the 2003 US-led invasion and Saddam's ouster.

But moments before the vote, two people were killed and more than two dozen wounded in separate suicide bombings in northern Iraq targeting local security forces, underscoring the lingering violence in the country.

In the bloodiest attack, south of the city of Mosul, a suicide car bomb detonated into a police patrol, killing two civilians and wounding 28 others, including 15 policemen, police said. AFP

MAHA al-Dari, a lawmaker loyal to Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, holds a sign that says "No, no, to the agreement" after Iraq's parliament approved a security pact with the United States in Baghdad on Nov. 27. AFP

Big hypertension study has minimal impact

THE SURPRISING NEWS made headlines in December 2002. Generic pills for high blood pressure, which had been in use since the 1950s and cost only pennies a day, worked better than newer drugs that were up to 20 times as expensive.

The findings, from one of the biggest clinical trials ever organized by the federal government, promised to save the nation billions of dollars in treating the ills of millions of Americans with hypertension—even if the conclusion did seem to threaten pharmaceutical giants like Pfizer that were making big money on bloodpressure hypertension drugs.

Six years later, though, the use of the inexpensive pills, called diuretics, is far smaller than some of the trial's supporters had hoped.

"It should have more than doubled," said Dr. Curt D. Furberg, a public health science professor at Wake Forest University who was the first chair of the steering committee for the study, which was financed by the National Affairs—then for the antihypertensive and Lipid-Lowering Treatment to Prevent Heart Attack Trial. "The report was disappointing."

The percentage of hypertensive patients receiving a diuretic rose to around 40 percent in the year after the trial's results were announced, up from 30 to 35 percent beforehand, according to some studies. But use of diuretics has since stayed at that plateau. And overall, use of newer hypertension drugs has grown faster than the use of diuretics since 2002, according to Medco Health Solutions, a pharmacy benefits manager.

The shortfalls of the study drove home hard it is to change medical practice, even after a government-sponsored trial costing $128 million produced what appeared to be solid evidence.

A confluence of factors blunted Allhat's impact. One was the simple difficulty of persuading doctors to change their habits.

Another was scientific disagreement, as many academic medical experts criticized the trial's design and the government's interpretation of the results.

Moreover, pharmaceutical companies responded by heavily marketing their own expensive hypertension drugs and, in some cases, paying speakers to publicly interpret the Allhat results in ways that made their products look better.

There was another factor: Medicine moves on. Even before Allhat was finished, and certainly since then, new drugs appeared. Others, meanwhile, became available in generics, reducing the cost advantage of the diuretics. And many doctors have shifted to using two or more drugs together, helped by pharmaceutical companies that offer combination pills containing two medicines. AYT

WHAT'S INSIDE
Hot Lady Stags secure Game 1 /A28

Editor Teddyboy S. Molondrina • Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ortuoste
SPORTS

Manny logs 153rd round of sparring /A29

Resurgent Realtors cream Alaska Aces

ALASKA spiker LA Tenorio (right) goes away from Sta. Lucia's Ryan Reyes on a pick by teammate Sonny Thoss in last night's game

By Marang R. Castillo

WILBERT CHOLUN SCORED 20 points and Norman Gonzales added 19 as defending champion Sta. Lucia played a strong second half to topple Alaska, 93-80, in the 8TC-PBA Philippine Cup elimination at the Trace Center in Antipolo.

The 6-foot-3 Cholun scored 13 of his total in the final two periods, while Gonzales (once) in all but two of his own as the Realtors, coming back strongly after losing to Talk 'N Text on Wednesday, improved to 7-4 for solo third place.

"We will take it (the remaining elimination round matches) one game at a time," said Sta. Lucia coach Bryan Navarro.

"There's still a long way to go. Ease of Shine is our next opponent, so we'll take it from there."

Willie Miller led the Aces with 22 points, but was held to five in the final half when the Realtors made their move. Alaska dropped to 4-4 but still remained in the lead.

Meanwhile, San Miguel Beer and Talk 'N Text left for Singapore yesterday to prepare for their game on the island city-state tomorrow.

Sta. Lucia eased at eight-point first half deficit when its defense finally held, and it became much easier from there with the Realtors managing to possess on a lot of opportunities after forcing turnovers.

The Realtors scored 33 points off a total of 29 Alaska turnovers, as the Aces failed to play with the same ruthless and efficient form that gave them a scintillating 27-point win over Talk 'N Text last Saturday.

Joseph Yeo, who fired a career-high 39 points when the Realtors humbled Talk 'N Text for a third straight win last week, chipped in with 17 rainbows and skipper Dennis Espino added 12.

Rony dela Cruz had 17 points and LA Tenorio 14 for Alaska.

An11 and Footlocker are serious trying to

Game time is 3 p.m. at the Tacloban Convention Center with the Tender Juicy Giants seeking a second straight win and the topmost ruling to bounce back from a listless performance against San Miguel on Wednesday.

As things stand, the Express are in a four-way tie for fourth spot after the Sta. Lucia win, with Purefoods still in the wild-card phase if the playoffs were to start today.

"It's going to get even tougher," Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio said. "Every game will be a struggle for everyone at this point of the tournament."

Rickey Paguia and James Yap will again banner the Giants, while the Express are expected to get Benjamin from their tested triumvirate of Randel de Ocampo, Gary David and Arwind Santos.

Paguia made over his career-high to 27 points when the Giants defeated the Express in their first meeting in this season's, 109-105, in overtime, making him a marked man as the as the (1) is concerned.

The scores:
SEA. Lucia 93 — Cholun 20, Gonzales 19, Yeo 17, Espino 12, Miranda 5, Reyes 8, Dupuis 2, Aquino 2, Williams 2, Mendoza 2, Jones 1, Baro
ALASKA 80 — Miller 22, dela Cruz 17, Tenorio 14, Cabagnot 6, De Jesus 4, Francis 2, Jabu-Pino 1, Fraser 0
Quarters: 21-21, 36-41, 69-63, 93-80

Peping keeps POC post–barely

Nips Macapagal by mere 2 votes; incumbent's slate pulls thru

By Jasmine W. Payo

COLUMNIST: Big challenge facing us.

VOTING RESULTS

HE WON A FIFTH MANDATE BY THE slimmest possible majority.

Jose "Peping" Cojuangco Jr. earned another four-year term as president of the Philippine Olympic Committee after surviving 21 of the 40 votes cast by heads of national sports associations (NSAs) yesterday at the Ayala Alabang Golf and Country Club in Muntinlupa City.

"I have to admit my heart beat a little bit faster than normal," said Cojuangco after overcoming the tough challenge of Antonio Macapagal, the older brother of Senator Manuel Aaron.

"There's a lot of work ahead of us," added Cojuangco. "There's a big challenge facing us. We can because we can accept the challenge. All of us now have to work harder than before."

Cojuangco's group got eight of the 10 seats in the race-filled general elections.

Independent candidate Monico Puentevella of wrestling won as chair, while Cojuangco candidates Manuel Luis Lopez (boxing) and Mario Tanchanco (squash/karate) were elected as first vice president and second vice president, respectively.

Also elected were Julian Camacho (weights) as treasurer, Corinna Mojica (body building) as auditor and Lorenzo Fe Hontiveros (archery), David Carter (judo) and Mark Joseph (swimming) as board members.

Cojuangco-led Bert Lina (cycling) pulled out his candidacy for board member last Wednesday, paving the way for one Macapagal candidate, Jeff Antonio Tamayo (soft tennis), to earn a seat in the board.

"The POC has made its decision, so I accept it," said Macapagal, a former champion shooter and veteran of the 1972 Munich and 1976 Montreal Olympics who campaigned for change to boost the country's bid for a first-ever Olympic gold.

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SBP president Manuel Pangilinan (right) and PCCL chair Roy Cortina present the trophy that will be awarded to the winner of the PL-08 Flying V "Sweet 16" Finals.

Last two 'Sweet 16' slots up for grabs

By Jasmine W. Payo

FAR EASTERN UNIVERSITY ARES to complete the UAAP roster's domination in the PBCM Flying V "Sweet 16" Challenge of the Philippine Collegiate Champions League.

But the Tamaraws, third players in the UAAP meet to handle a spunky foe in NCAA runner-up Jose Rizal University at 4 p.m. today at The Arena in San Juan.

Lehran and Jose Sebastian College Cavite also shoot for one of the two remaining berths in the elite eight in their 2 p.m. duel.

If the Tamaraws triumph, UAAP teams will vote primi huli' of the qualifiers in the next round.

EARLY TODAY
(The Arena, San Juan)
1 p.m. — JRU vs. Far Eastern (Girls)
Early
Up next — Lyceum (Boys) vs. Far Eastern (Boys)

The winner in today's knockout bouts will meet again in the next round, which features three other matchups between UAAP champion Ateneo and Mapua, the Pentasters brethren with Perpetual La Salle going up against younger brother Dimla's University of the East and three-time NCAA titlist San Beda and Arellano University.

DMA are even between coach Glenn Capacio's Tamaraws and Ariel Tampoc-dela's Bombers, this season's surprise NCAA finalist spearheaded by John Wilson, Marvin Hayes, Jaycee Bocaon and Amiso Sena.

The Tamaraws, who qualified from the Mindanao rounds, will lean on Mac Sumaoil, Mark Barroca, Earl Cervantes and JR Cawaling.

Bino Dias, Ray Guevarra and Ed Jacal will head the Eagles' campaign against the Bisayan, who earned an outright berth in the top 16 after bagging the National Athletic Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (Nassco) championship.

The winner of the national tournament, sanctioned by the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas and backed by Smart, PLDT, PJ-08 Flying V and KFC, will represent the country in the Universiade Games in Belgrade, Serbia next year.

SHAKEY'S V-LEAGUE

Hot Lady Stags secure Game 1

By Cedrill P. Tapas

GAMES TOMORROW
(San Juan, The Arena)
9 a.m. — La Salle vs. Adamson
4 p.m. — EAC vs. UST

SAN SEBASTIAN SHOOTS ON THE BRINK of Ike Ilustre Shakey's V-League crowns last night as the Lady Stags outplayed Letran early en route to a 25-23, 25-19, 19-25, 26-24, tie Game 1 of their second meeting in best-of-three duel at The Arena in San Juan.

Lea Ann Ladigay earned Most Valuable Player before the game, justified her billing with a terrific all-around performance that included 15 hits and 11 digs for the Lady Stags, who could clinch the title with a victory in Game 2 on Sunday.

"We really showed the discipline we started with last game today," said EAC coach Roger Gonzaga of the 22-win-six spillover from Letran.

The Lady Stags, who scored 46 points off setters, regrouped from 17-21 down in the third set, thanks to a Ladigay hit, an ace by teammate Dorie Salinas (Symbolic Deweaknesses) and errors by former Taiwanese Lady Ann Caballejo.

EAC guest player Stanislaus Sison, who transferred for UST last year, scored four of the last six points, including a stunning hit that saved UST's only set point of the match.

The Tigresses' head tutor, Aboy Bernal, was miffed with authority by Jimi Mendejar on match point, underscoring the Lady Stags' dominance.

Lea Ann Ladigay mailed, 3-0, in the second set, before Ladigay, who also ripped the opening-set victory with three successive hits, were to work again hitting three assaults that allowed the Lady Stags to pull away from, 17-all.

UST coach Cesael Delos Santos surprisingly left out Mary Ann Maier from his line-up in the third set, leaving another down in their stretch.

"We were able to capitalize on Babe's absence," said Gonzaga. "Our receiving was poor in the third set, good thing we recovered."

Bernal was held to 12 points, her lowest in the tournament, while Babe finished with just four attackers.

Earlier, Adamson rubbed La Salle, 25-15, 21-25, 24-26, 31-30, 15-10, in Game 1 of their battle for third place.

Other matches: (JCS-San Sebastian (men) served, SSCS-Ateneo (women) served, 2:30PM-Adamson-Ateneo (boys) Stadium) and Adamson's Janet Serafica (men) and Lyceus Jan Gaile (boys)

UST spiker Vienna Bernal finds the defense of EAC's Hyacinth Devanadera and Charmae Arellano too low to handle.

Ever Bilena, RP ladies five target WPBL lead

By Jasmine W. Payo

DISCOVERY RP Women's Team and defending champion Iron Bilena vie to keep a share of the lead as they take on separate rivals in the Women's Philippine Basketball League today at the Ipoman's gym in Marikina.

The nationals, powered by Monicamara Arapi and Cheri Ibarja, will clash against Cherokee Simbala in 3:45 p.m. to open heavy four-game bill.

Matcha Bacani and Aiane Cruz will also try to lead Iron Bilena since against the Xtreme-RP Youth at 11:45 a.m.

Soldiers La Salle and Oracle Swimwears will square off at 10 a.m., while Smart-AS and Intel and Shore will battle at 2 p.m.

Matcha Bacani-led Iron Bilena's third straight victory with a 64-52 whipping of Ateneo Sports University of the Philippines last Thursday at the Powers Sports venue in Pasig.

Bacani, the reigning UAAP Most Valuable Player from University of Santo Tomas, unloaded 15 points built on a 5-of-16 shooting aside from collecting four rebounds, four steals and three assists.

Cruz also jumped to 14 numbers, including six that helped topple the Lady Maroons fourth-quarter comeback.

After trailing at 29-33 at halftime, the Gaming Pinoy outscored the Lady Maroons, 19-6, to the third canto to notice the lead at 47-41.

The victory propelled the Gaming Pinoy on top with Discovery Subaru-RP at 5-0. Sharp-C Admission secured sixth place with a 3-1 mark.

The scores:
IRON BILENA 64 — Bacani 15, Cruz 14, Hamamura 7, Cayetano 6, Lacsamana 6, Santos 4, Williams 3, Carmen 3, Bautista 2, Ramos 2, Ramirez 0, Ramos 0, Ramos 0, Ramos

Manny logs 153rd round of sparring

Roach unruffled by Pacman's 'bad day'

By Francis T.J. Cruz
Assistant Sports Editor

LOS ANGELES—THE APPLAUSE SEEMED more respectful than mo-inspired. At the end of eight more rounds of sparring, the refreshingly sparse holiday crowd at the Wild Card Gym broke out in a light applause as a couple of trainees bawled Manny Pacquiao back to a corner.

It wasn't the best of performances, but it wasn't something Freddie Roach was overtly upset about, either.

"We're good," pre boxing's two-time Trainer of the Year told reporters as Pacquiao readied his Thanksgiving Day workout and hurriedly left the gym on Vine Street in Hollywood. "Overall, I'm happy with his performance."

Screwdrivers, though, would have gotten quite a jolt as Pacquiao repeatedly got tagged by sparring mate Rashid Holloway in the first of a pair of four-rounders penciled into Thursday's regimen. One of those hits seemed to have the pound-for-pound champ into a slight look-pedal.

Roach, however, dismissed the slight performance as something that was merely a result of Pacquiao's playfulness coupled with the trainer's stomach problems.

"He's always playful a little bit ... with his sparring partners," Roach said, adding the reigning WBC lightweight champion "had a little trouble with his acid reflux and he told me he didn't want to go hard."

Unexplored show

The 27-year-old Holloway, who has been prepping Pacquiao ever since the latter broke camp to shape up for the "Dream Match" against Oscar De La Hoya on Dec. 6 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, also shrugged off Pacquiao's undesired show.

"Everybody has a bad day at camp and this was probably one of Manny's," said Holloway.

But Roach still managed to find gems out of that "bad day."

"I thought I saw explosiveness," Roach said. "When he wanted it, it was there for him."

Pacquiao did manage to hold his ground against a pair of fight establishments in the eight rounds of sparring that licked his camp total 153 Thursday (Friday in Manila). In the second of the four rounders, Pacquiao explored an arsenal of combinations, evoking Marvin Gardens.

'I felt his power'

"He didn't hurt me, but I felt his power," Gardens said.

Pacquiao eventually rode off to his Palisades residence for a Thanksgiving blues and dinner with family and close supporters.

None of his sparring partners drew the morning from Pacquiao's performance. Thursday, still giving him their vote of confidence against De La Hoya, when training resumes for the conclusion at The Big Bear facility in Calabasas.

"Manny's like an animal in the ring," said Gardens, adding that De La Hoya's main tools— the jab and left hook—isn't enough to stave off the relentless pressure that X-factor is expected to unleash on fight night.

"If Oscar comes in with just one jab, Manny's going to counter it and with the right hook-left hook," Gardens said. "If Oscar brings in the double jab I'd have to watch out for Manny's left hand. But all Oscar's got is his left. He don't got no right hand."

Holloway believes Pacquiao can bully the bigger De La Hoya into defeat on Dec. 6.

"I think Manny's going to definitely beat Oscar and if he sticks to the game plan, he goes in the body and he snaps over those pressures every round, pressing he able to cut a stoppage," Holloway said.

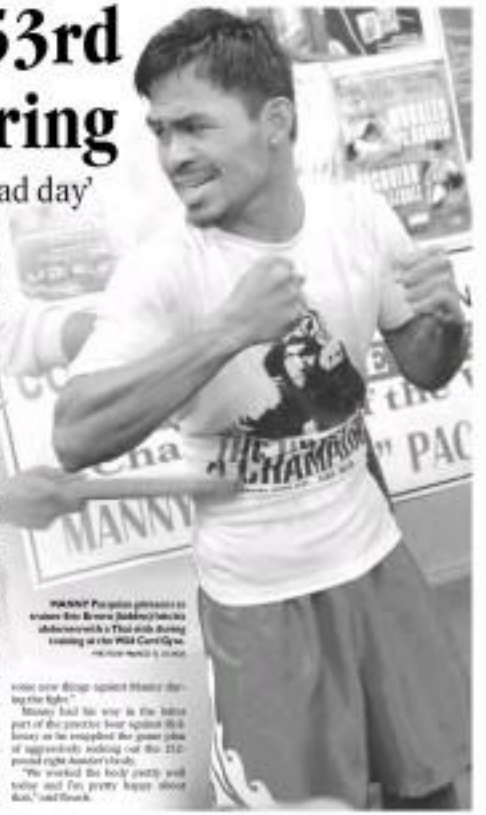
"But in all honesty, I think he's going to beat the mess out of Oscar for 12 rounds."

Holloway's game drawing against Pacquiao was also brought about by his decision to bring something new into the ring, a variety of moves that Roach encouraged his ward to try.

"Rashid wanted to try something new and I told him to go ahead," Roach said. "Oscar's a smart guy and I figured that he might try out some new things against Manny during the fight."

Manny had his way in the latter part of the practice bout against Rick Jersey as he swapped the game plan of aggressively nailing out the 212-pound right hander's body.

"We worked the body pretty well today and I'm pretty happy about that," said Roach.



MANNY Pacquiao prepares to endure Eric Bonora (bobbing) blocks underneath a Thai kick during training at the Wild Card Gym.
PHOTOS FRANCIS T.J. CRUZ

Oscar will hit deck in 8 or 9, says sparmate

By Francis T.J. Cruz

LOS ANGELES—THE MEN... [illegible] good. The experience? Even better.

While light middleweight Rashid Holloway and Marlo Godoes admitted that the sessions they agreed to help Manny Pacquiao tune up for their against Oscar De La Hoya in the Dec. 6 "Dream Match" at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas is the good gun, they said the chance to share ring space with the Filipino icon also struggled All Pacquiao's undisputed three.

"Everybody has a bad day at camp and this was probably one of Manny's," said Holloway.

But Roach still managed to find gems out of that "bad day."

PACQUIAO CONVERTS Sparmates Marvin Gardens and Rashad Holloway

"I thought I saw explosiveness," Roach said. "When he wanted it, it was there for him."

Pacquiao did manage to hold his ground against a pair of fight establishments in the eight rounds of sparring that licked his camp total 153 Thursday (Friday in Manila). In the second of the four rounders, Pacquiao explored an arsenal of combinations, evoking Marvin Gardens.

'I felt his power'

"He didn't hurt me, but I felt his power," Gardens said.

Pacquiao eventually rode off to his Palisades residence for a Thanksgiving blues and dinner with family and close supporters.

None of his sparring partners drew the morning from Pacquiao's performance. Thursday, still giving him their vote of confidence against De La Hoya, when training resumes for the conclusion at The Big Bear facility in Calabasas.

"Manny's like an animal in the ring," said Gardens, adding that De La Hoya's main tools— the jab and left hook—isn't enough to stave off the relentless pressure that X-factor is expected to unleash on fight night.

"If Oscar comes in with just one jab, Manny's going to counter it and with the right hook-left hook," Gardens said. "If Oscar brings in the double jab I'd have to watch out for Manny's left hand. But all Oscar's got is his left. He don't got no right hand."

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"We worked the body pretty well today and I'm pretty happy about that," said Roach.

DE LA HOYA: He might try something new.

"Manny can definitely punch. Have you ever looked at his legs? That's where he generates his power from. He's very fast, he's very explosive. I underestimated him early on because he was small. He made me catch up really quick."

Gardens even predicted Pacquiao will knock out De La Hoya.

"He speed is going to be the advantage in this fight," he said. "He's going to bring it to Oscar. He's going to let Oscar come the first six rounds. he's going to box him, pop-shot him. After that, he's just going to put it to him.

"Oscar's not going to last 12. Oscar gets tired after six rounds, so after that, Manny is going to knock him out in the eighth or ninth round."

Talent, speed and power, though, are not the only things people notice once they get close enough to Pacquiao on a regular basis.

"He's a good guy, takes care of us, gives us fight tickets," Gardens said.

"Manny's not only a great fighter but one of the greatest guys I've ever met," Holloway added. "Manny's got a heart of gold and he treats everyone the same."

MVP Novemberfest at Basilio's tonight

SOLAR SPORTS AND BASKETBALL TV hold the final leg of the Solar MVP Golf Novemberfest with a big bash at Basilio's at the Fort starting at 9 tonight.

Organizers of the event, aimed at promoting Solar Sports and Basketball TV's exclusive membership card, said guests will be treated to open bar drinks by the Mucgarita Bing and Global Beer Barbeque.

Also up for grabs are tickets for the Asian Basketball Confederation Champions Cup for Dec. 7.

Also at stake are game tickets to the Philippine Basketball Association games, DVD players MP3 players, iPOD shirts and lots of fabulous prizes.

The first 30 guests will automatically get MVP cards.

The previous venues of the Solar MVP Card Novembefest were at Rubbi's, Magnolia Shores, Il Prosciutto, Makan and Il Prato Restaurant.

59TH FIL-AM

ABW nips Aguinaldo golfers for Fil A title

BACOLOD CITY—ABW LEADS OF LBC held off Camp Aguinaldo for the second straight day to take the Fil-Am Amateur Golf Championship crown in an exciting three-at the Bacolod Golf Club.

ABW duplicated its one-point, open-top round victory of Aguinaldo on Wednesday by fashioning out a 70-91 conquest yesterday, ending up with a 408-bold for a two-point victory. Manila finished third with 393 points after a 89.

The duo A-team of Camp Aguinaldo carried some momentum by during out with 400 for a 392 total to turn back Manila (70-93 points and win the division. Manila had closed out with a 94 and 337. Villa Gallo finished third after an 89 and 337.

In Fil E action, third LBC scored a final day 74 for 346 points that resulted in a four-point victory over two-day leader Dodjie Rogue, which remained 773 points for 342. Team Out-Elite rocked up third with 323 after a 72.

Square A. Gregorio had a closing round of 77 for 314 to nip PGMC Nickel Boy by four strokes. PGMC had a 73 for 318, with Ram Manuel bagging third place with 247 after an 88.

A final day 95, meanwhile, gave Gamel Fernandez a 21-point runup over Bernie Square A. Gregorio. Bernie tallied 361 points, while Fernando Square A. Gregorio had 279 after a 65. Eric Arevalo was third with 72 and 271 total.

Bugs Washington was virtually unchallenged in taking the Jay G crown, finishing one to 54 for a 69-point victory over Chamorro with a 206 total. Chamorro was good for a 76 for 337, with Dad belonging to Ramy Ilao Agpai.

VICTORS Golden Girl Bong Sison, Freddie Mendoza, Florem-Ariel Santos, Eugene Arriesgado, Iggy Concordia and Prospero Gaanan (from left) show their trophy for topping the Fil Championship division during Thursday's awards rites.

The event is being hosted by Wilson Sports, Hi-Tec, Club Cue, Eva Air, Royal Caribbean, Bendy & Bolden Pulli, GH Development Corporation, Serapio Formoso, Golf Boss, The Manila Dam, Fine Philippines, Inn Miguel Corporation, Ultra, Fil Estate, Sky Golf and Optimum Information Professionals Inc. was the scoring administrator.

SPORTS

Howard casts Magic spell on Wizards

WASHINGTON—THE WASHINGTON Wizards were helpless against Dwight Howard.

The NBA's leading rebounder, Howard had 26 points, 14 rebounds and three blocks to help the Orlando Magic beat the Wizards, 103-90, on Thursday night.

Orlando has won eight of its last nine games and 44 in a row on the road.

Howard toyed with four Washington defenders—scoring 14 points and grabbing nine rebounds in the first 8:44 for the Magic took a 25-11 lead.

"One thing is we have to come out strong and hit inside hard—how the game is going to be played the whole night," Howard said.

"We've got to be able to do that every night to be a good team. Look at the teams like the Celtics and the Lakers, they come out the first quarter and they dominate and set the tone. We have to continue to do that in order to be one of those teams."

Jaffale McGee started in center for Washington, and he picked up two fouls in 2:58. Andray Blatche was the next to try to stop Howard, and he had two fouls in 1:47. By then, Howard had seven points.

Rasa Thomas was the third to guard Howard, who scored seven more points as the Magic went on an 11-0 run to take their 14-point lead.

"He was obviously the dominant guy in the first half," Orlando coach Stan Van Gundy said. "Getting off to a good start was also important."

Howard went to the bench numerous times, and Washington, which has dropped 11 of its 13 games this season, went on a 19-3 run to cut it to 38-34 early in the second quarter. Only Darius Songaila had a modicum of success against him.

Playing against Howard was a frustrating experience for Wizards newcomer coach Bill Laimbeer.

"He takes up a lot of space," Jagucar said. "It's like a quarter-mile around his shoulders, he's so broad."

Caron Butler scored 19 of his 23 points in the first half for Washington.

At Denver, James Posey made a three-pointer with 18.1 seconds left to lift the New Orleans Hornets to their fourth straight victory, 103-101, over the Denver Nuggets, one of his former teams.

Chris Paul led the Hornets with 22 points and 10 assists, but came up six rebounds short of his third straight triple-double.

He hit a three-pointer to tie it at 91-91 and the Hornets took a four-point lead on Pop Srubanovic's triple and a subsequent free throw after Kenyon Martin got a technical. AP

ORLANDO Magic's Dwight Howard blocks a shot by Washington Wizards' Johan McGee.

AI skips practice, faces fines

DETROIT—ALLEN IVERSON APPARently chose family and food over practice—and he'll be fined for it.

Iverson was the only player who didn't show up when the Detroit Pistons marched out on Thanksgiving.

Coach Michael Curry confirmed Iverson will be fined, will not start Friday night against the Milwaukee Bucks and might not play in the game following the practice.

After Detroit traded for the superstar, Iverson insisted he would do whatever Curry wanted him to and even smoked his famous cast-about practices while playing for the Philadelphia 76ers.

The Pistons are 1-5 since acquiring Iverson from Denver for Chauncey Billups, Antonio McDyess and Cheikh Samb.

McDyess said he will re-sign next month in Detroit. AP

RP climbs to 10th as Spain posts 4-shot lead

SHENZHEN, CHINA—MIGUEL ANGEL Jimenez and Pablo Larrazabal lifted Spain to a four-shot lead at the World Cup of Golf, shooting a surprising 8-under 63 on Friday playing the difficult Sunvenues Jabrisun-shed Course.

Spain was 17-under 127 after 36 holes, with Australia, after a 66, and Germany now tied for second at 131. The Netherlands is 6th.

Filipinos Mars Pamo and Angelo Que would only manage a level 72 but still gained some ground by climbing into a tie for 10th spot at 138, now four back from five-down at the start of the day.

Sweden (67 Fifth), was three back and the United States (69), and Ireland (66) were six off the pace.

The formidable Indian tandem of Jeev Randhawa and Jeev Milkha Singh also fired a 72 to stay tied with the Philippines.

Mikko Ilonen-Shoppe Kukka of Finland posted a 72 to join the Filipinos and the Indians at five-under.

The sensational round by the Spaniards should give them a strong chance to win the event, which usually goes on the team that plays best in foursomes where scores are typically higher. Individual returns to four ball.

Spain picked up seven strokes to the front nine with five birdies and an eagle. It was at 9-under after 10 holes and 9-under after 11, before dropping to first shot on 13.

However, the Spaniards recovered on 16, moving back to 9-under when Larrazabal dropped a 40-foot birdie putt. On 18, Larrazabal missed an 8-foot putt for birdie which would have brought Spain to 10-under.

The record in foursomes in the World Cup is 19-under 61 by Argentina in 2008.

Spain has won the event four times, twice with Sere Ballesteros, in 1976 and 1997. It last won in 2004 with Jose Maria Cinctorres and Jose Rivero.

It's been a great year for Spain in football with even the European championship and runners, Spain just won the Davis Cup and is world No. 1 Rafael Nadal. AP

QUE

Casio Open: Miñoza now seven down

KOCHI, JAPAN—FORMER PHILIPPINE Open champion Frankie Miñoza assembled a one-under-par 71 yesterday to easily make the cut of the Casio Open, but the second doomsday left seven strokes off the tournament pace being set by Komoi Ono.

Counting his opening 69, the 48-year-old Miñoza, whose second Philippine Open title came last year in Black Mountain, has a 36-hole 140 aggregate in the ¥21.4 million tournament serving as part of the lucrative Japanese Tour.

Miñoza was the highest-placed non-Japanese after two rounds, with Korean Kim Kyung-tae at 141 after a 72.

Overnight leader Oda eventually ran eagle-aided 67 to stretch his lead to four over countryman Ichi Sato, who fired a 70 for 137.

Oda gained momentum with that eagle on the 18th hole before adding five birdies against two bogeys for a two-round total of 11 under 133.

Ryuichiro Kumi (70), Yusaku Miyazato (65), Hirofumi Miyase (69) and US PGA veteran Shingo Katayama (70) were all tied at 139, a stroke behind solo third place Kenichi Kobaya, who shot-and-out his version of a 70.

Japanese prodigy Ryo Ishikawa, 17, made it memorable for he would become the youngest golfer in history to earn more than ¥1.00 million ($11 million) by shooting the cut line with 141 for 14th place tie.

The previous record-holder, Ai Miyazato, was 19 when he reached the millionaire in 2004.

Top 50 golfers who marked a two-over-par 146 or best advanced to the third round, vying for the winner's check of ¥20 million. AFP

MIÑOZA

SUPERTHIL Coyiuto has the makings of a future champion.

Coyiuto still PCA 14-U champion

SECOND SEED SAMANTHA COYIUTO rallied past third seed Alaiza de Guzman, 6-4, 4-6, 6-1, to retain the 14-under division of the 2009 PCA Tennis Open Junior at the PCA Indoor court recently.

Armed with a solid forehand, the high school freshman at Immaculate Conception Academy moved to a 5-3 third set lead and eventually wrapped up the match after more than two hours.

"We both played well," said the 14-year-old Coyiuto after winning her second PCA championship title. "I just got better in the third set."

Coyiuto beat Pelarong Pantheon gold medalist Marian Jade Capadocia of Antipolo, 6-4, 6-2, in the semifinals.

Capadocia, however, is having another tough Rafael Nalise for the past two years.

"This will inspire me to do better in future tournaments," said Coyiuto. Steve Idlee, Contributor

Alcantara battles Park for Phinma jr net title

By Ronnie S. Austria

TOP SEED FRANCIS CASEY ALCANtara and Korean qualifier Benjamin Park will clash for the Phinma International Juniors Tennis Championship Week 1 title after beating their respective semifinal foes yesterday at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center.

Alcantara swept compatriot Jesse Raymundus, 6-4, 6-4, while Park Ellis used and fellow Korean Yong-Jae Kwon, 6-4, 6-3.

The girls singles finals will pit top seed Lolikka Kundakom of Thailand against qualifier Yang Dancaoan of China.

Standard world No. 39 in the junior circuit, Alcantara trailed 3-4 in the second set but held serve to make it 4-4. He rallied on his first-found to take the next two games and the match.

"Wagunda rin ang lamang ng kalaban para sa akin at medyo ka rin. Ubly opponent also had a good game but I overturned him," said the 16-year-old Alcantara, a native of Cagayan de Oro. "Lahat lang. Maganda naman ang laro ko, ano-mintado ako 100 percent give o good fight. I'm having a good run. I hope I win."

Strong nine tournaments be joined in this year. Alcantara's best finish so far was runner-up in Bangkok last month. He won the Phinma Week 2 title last year.

No. 999 Park is on his first year in the junior circuits. He previously saw action in six tournaments in New Zealand and four in South Korea before competing in the country.

Raymundus lived up to her billing by stockpiling fourth seed Alisa Oginawidiwa, 6-1, 6-2.

Winner of three titles in Pakistan last October and one in Indonesia three weeks ago, Ramirez, world No.203, goes for the title against Yang, who clubbered No. 8 Kulkanok Tjenpong of Thailand, 6-4, 6-1.

In the doubles division, second seeds Ramirez and Britain Ellen Ball managed a semifinal showdown with third seeds Shao-Chen Lee of Chinese Taipei and Sashenie Tan of Singapore.

Editor Raul C. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Connie S. Martinez

BUSINESS

Sentry Safes
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SM MEGAMALL

Landbank, SSS selling Meralco stakes

Terms of block sale seen similar to GSIS deal with SMC

By Doris C. Dumlao and Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL institutions led by Land Bank of the Philippines and the Social Security System have agreed to sell their minority stakes in Manila Electric Co. in a block for about P60 billion—a premium over the blue chip's closing price of P506 on Friday.

In a briefing Thursday night, Landbank president Gilda Pico said the effective selling price would be about P60 a share or equal to the package bagged by the Government Service Insurance System when the pension fund sold its 27 percent stake to food and beverage giant San Miguel Corp.

Pico said it was still uncertain who would buy the shares. For its part, Landbank is selling 40 million shares, including those lodged with PDC Nominee Corp., equivalent to almost 6 percent of Meralco.

"Maybe next week, there will be a final agreement," she said.

SMC president Ramon Ang said his company was interested in acquiring

LONGHORN, B4

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■ **First Pacific completes** purchase of Philex stake /B3

RP medical tourism gets big boost

By Roland W. Domingo

THE LOCAL TOURISM INDUSTRY IS POSITIONING the country as a medical and health destination for Middle Eastern visitors who have been showing preference for South-east Asia, particularly the Philippines.

Tourism Secretary Joey Durano said the move was timely since the Philippines won the bid to host the 2009 World Health Tourism Congress, which will be held in March, the organizers of which is based in Dubai.

Durano said this was just the fourth time that the yearly gathering was being held outside the ICC host countries in Europe.

"The Philippines' being the first country in Asia Pacific to serve as a venue for this prestigious global event marks our serious effort to be positioned as a global health and wellness destination," he said.

"The 2009 WHTC, which will be held at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila on March 28-30, will bring hundreds of leading health and wellness tourism players—both buyers and sellers—from all over the world," he added.

Durano said the Philippines "won the privilege to host it after some fervent negotiations."

After the first congress in Germany in 2006, Cyprus hosted the second in 2007 and Spain was the venue for this year's event.

"Local participating health and wellness industry players will have the opportunity to meet the world's best qualified corporate and institutional buyers in an exclusive

MEDICAL, B4

Stocks close higher

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 5.2 PERCENT higher yesterday as fund managers bought strong stocks to provide a cheer to their portfolios at the end of the month, dealers said.

The composite index added 4.91 points to 1,871.02, while the all-shares index rose 2.2 percent to 1,262.38.

There were 45 losers, 28 decliners and 58 unchanged.

Turnover reached 881.8 million shares worth P1.2 billion.

"This is just month-end window dressing. We should see some recovery next week," Joey Frieda of Eagle Equities told Dow Jones Newswires. Trading resumes Tuesday after a long weekend as markets will be closed Monday for a public holiday.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. added 3.2 percent to P2,340, while property firm Megaworld rose 3.3 percent to P1.82.

Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co. added one percent to P24.30 while Ayala Corp. fell one percent to P410. AFP

DTI: RTC's Transco ruling sets serious precedent

By Reinard W. Domingo

TRADE SECRETARY PETER B. FAVILA yesterday expressed deep concern about a court ruling that would stop the National Transmission Corp. from using the Transco Accounts Receivable Title to deliver power to key areas in Metro Manila and adjacent provinces.

Describing it to be a potential "crisis," Favila said the ruling would affect productivity of most industries, and that the decision would "bring serious power problems in the metropolis."

Favila also said that the ruling has set "a serious precedent," which could allow other residential areas to disconnect vital power installations that service commercial and industries.

"We are looking for ways to avert a crisis," he said. At a time when the world is being rocked by a financial crisis, "the country should be avoiding problems such as power shortages."

In its Oct. 31 ruling, the Makati City Regional Trial Court Branch 66 ordered Transco to implement a Supreme Court decision against the use of a 22B kilovolt transmission line, feeding electricity from power plants in Batangas, to points of Muntinlupa City, Bel Roseller, Bonanzalea Village in Makati City, and Quezon City.

The high court in March 2006 acted on a petition of Bonanzalea Village residents, who were concerned about possible health risks presented by the transmission lines.

When the National Power Corp., which used to operate Transco, started building the power lines in 1996, the residents wanted to the local court. In 2000, the RTC decided in favor of the residents. But the Court of Appeals overturned the decision, citing lack of jurisdiction.

Transco has asked the SOC to delay the implementation of the high court ruling until after the holidays.

BSP's forex stock outside of GIR fell by $1B in Oct.

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS' foreign exchange stock outside its official foreign reserves fell by about $1 billion in October as the central bank freed up US dollars to temper the peso's sharp depreciation.

Foreign exchange locked up in foreign currency swaps and not yet booked as part of the country's gross international reserves (GIR) dropped further to $1.7 billion at end-October from $2.69 billion at end-September, based on the latest BSP report.

It was the lowest level of foreign exchange swap held by the central bank in the this year.

Since March, the BSP has been mopping US dollars in its currency swaps and selling them in the foreign exchange market to prop the weakening peso while conserving its GIR.

The foreign exchange swaps have since gone down from an all-time high of about $13 billion recorded in January to February this year.

Bulk of the outstanding foreign-exchange swaps as of end-October, worth about $1.13 billion, will mature in more than three months but less than a year, the BSP report said.

Currency dealers suspected that the US dollars mobilized by the central bank from the forex swaps were mostly used to intervene in the spot foreign exchange markets to defend the peso.

If the dealers were to assume that the decline in forex swaps approximated the volume of US dollars sold in the market, the BSP's intervention would have amounted to about $11.5 billion since the start of the year.

But the peso still depreciated by nearly 15 percent against the US dollar since January, reversing the 19-percent rise recorded in 2007.

Basic human greed

THE BANGKO Sentral is trying its best to keep interest rates low to keep the financial system liquid—borrowing, users of money are still out there.

And so, when bank deposit rates are low, and the stock market is going into RED, it is no wonder the Security Bank "tier 2" offering should become a hit.

Here, this is just a bit of info on such bank debt notes. For one, and this is important, the Bangko Sentral sets limits on such notes.

I mean, really banks cannot just issue "tier 2" notes, the amount of which they must have planked from the start or issued later.

Also, rightly trustee (not connected with the bank of course) will monitor the bank's compliance with the terms of the "tier 2" issuance.

I gathered that the Security Bank issuance was already oversubscribed last week.

Other facts that I heard out were, the interest period is quarterly, the initial interest rate is 8.3 percent a year, the maturity date is 10 years from issue date, and the minimum lot is P500,000.

You know immediately that such notes carry more than bank deposits.

Plus, I understand that the international credit rating firm Fitch also gave the issue by Bank "tier 2" notes an investment grade rating of A+. That means that the notes carry "relatively low to moderate credit risk."

Which, easy to think of it, should only be expected, because such notes alone are in the blessings of the Bangko Sentral.

WE ALL know that "high net worth" individuals have booming, guys with money coming out of their ears) took a liberal from the government's guidelines.

Some business think tanks believe that, because these interested people are to-die-for-millions-dollars persons, they sure just drokit to hold off purchases of life's necessities, like luxury cars and chinaware. So I asked around the high-end establishments at Fort Bonifacio and, true enough, some of them are already feeling the pinch.

But the bright side of the architecture is that, somehow, the dollar is still gaining against the peso.

That is good for the 10 million Filipinos working abroad who send money to their families and relatives here.

With more pesos in their hands, the families of OFWs that have meant purchasing power, which is good news for more market brands like "Beach."

THE PALACE is not going up on the Hindenburg power talks.

Insiders say that the administration now believes that the power talks are excuses media embody because of the bold terrorism attacks in Mumbai, India.

A recording MMS (announcement of agreement) will still be the way to go, despite the notoriety of the previously codified "MOA on Ancestral Domain," which was done secretly by the administration power posed with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

From what I hear, the Palin is inclined to appoint new faces in the power panel, such as neo-bishops, two cousins and two nieces anyone...all from Hindenburg.

They apparently know the real sentiments of the people that will be affected by the MOA. Hopefully, they can come up with an agreement that is . . . well, "fair."

More jobs seen with income tax rate cut

By Michelle V. Rosario

THE REDUCTION OF THE CORPORATE income tax rate starting in January 2009 may allow businesses to create more jobs and help temper the ill effects of a global slowdown on the Philippine economy.

The corporate income tax rate will be reduced from 35 to 30 percent.

"Savings to be generated by businesses [from lower taxes] next year will help prevent job cuts, or even encourage companies to create additional investment plans, and thus create jobs," Economic Planning Secretary Ralph Recto said.

The government is estimated to lose about P15 billion in potential tax collection a year from the 5-percentage-point drop in the corporate income tax rate. Although some said the lower corporate income tax rate would dampen the government's pump-priming initiatives, Recto said the net effect of a lower tax rate would actually be positive for the economy.

Companies that will generate savings from lower taxes may pursue investment opportunities and boost employment, resulting in an increase in the number of taxable income, Recto said.

He added that at a time when the global economy is decelerating, a lower fiscal policy, perhaps through the lowering of rates, would be one way to help boost consumption and maintain a decent growth in the economy.

The cut in the corporate income tax rate is embodied in Republic Act No. 9337, or the Reformed Value-Added Tax law. The cut in the tax accounts necessary law to amend to ease the people's burden following the increase in the value-added tax rate from 10 to 12 percent in 2006.

In 2009, corn yield expected to be lower than gov't estimate

By Amy R. Remo

LOCAL FARMERS EXPECT CORN PRODUCTION next year to be far lower than government estimates, citing high input prices and the recent hiking of the tariff on feed-wheat imports.

In a briefing, Philippine Maize Federation Inc. founder Rod Rizon said "it would be impossible" to meet government targets given these developments.

For 2009, the Department of Agriculture had said it expects corn production to expand a hefty 12 percent to 7.8 million metric tons from an estimated 6.98 million MT.

Rizon explained that, according to their estimates, about 30 percent of farmers had no intention of planting the grain from December 2008 onward, because of the high prices of farm inputs, as well as the government's recent move to lift the tariff on the importation of feed wheat.

"This evaluation will have an impact on the first and second quarters of the year," he said.

Local corn farmers had been reeling from the high cost of farm inputs, particularly fertilizers, which had led to reduced acreage and consequently reduced yield per farmer.

First Pacific completes purchase of Philex stake

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

FIRST PACIFIC CO. LTD. YESTERDAY completed its acquisition of a 20 percent stake in top gold and copper producer Philex Mining Corp. for P6.17 billion through a block sale at the Philippine Stock Exchange.

In a disclosure, Philex said it sold 770.62 million treasury shares at P7.92 each to Asia Link BV, a corporation wholly-owned by First Pacific.

Asia Link's purchase price was a premium of P2.42 a share over Philex's closing price yesterday of P5.50.

The transaction, which consisted of two blocks of 389.3 million shares each, was brokered by First Metro Securities Brokerage Corp., a unit of banking giant Metrobank, and Philippine Equity Partners.

Following the closure of the deal, elected to the board of Philex are nominees of First Pacific, namely the conglomerate's managing director and Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. chair Manuel Pangilinan and First Pacific executive director and PT Indofood Sukses Makmur Tbk. commissioner Robert Wehrhahn.

Philex independent director and former National Power Corp. president Guido Alfredo Delgado resigned to make way for one of the First Pacific nominees since Pangilinan took the vacant seat left by tycoon John Gokongwei after he sold his stake to the mining giant.

The composition of the Philex board are as follows: Philex Ramos as chair and chief executive, Federico Cuunan (MS) chair) and Rosendo Sicat (ID) president, both members of the Social Security System (SSS), former trade minister Roberto Ongpin (vice chair), Jose Ignacio Villabona (Philex president), Nicholson Pangilinan, Petron Corp. president Eric Ikeru and Amado Valdez as independent directors.

PXC, which now holds 39 percent of Philex, earlier raised a fuss about the sale to First Pacific, saying the company should have offered it first to existing stockholders who had a right to exercise their preemptive privileges.

Philex then decided to offer to sell the treasury shares to all stockholders of the common stock of PF.92 offered to First Pacific.

2 block sales worth P6.17B

Chowking completes P270-M modernization plan

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

CHOWKING, THE ORIENTAL QUICK SERVICE chain of Jollibee Foods Corp., said yesterday it has completed a P270-million modernization program that will help set the stage for the company's future growth.

In a disclosure, Jollibee said Chowking's "OMEGA" (pronounced as "Omega") project or "Designed, Modernized, and Streamlined Supply Chain and Manufacturing," a two-year modernization program that started in 2006, involved the expansion and renovation of Chowking's noodle building, increased warehouse and an improved food manufacturing process at its two commissaries in Mandaluyong City.

"JFC is fortunate that in spite of the current economic challenges, we are able to continue to invest and modernize our facilities. It is our aim to ensure that we continuously find innovative ways to deliver high quality and very good tasting products to our customers," Jollibee chair Tony Tan Caktiong said.

Chowking president Erwin Ekeleve said the upgrades would enhance the chain's food preparation , safety and sanitation.

Highly automated machines are used to prepare food items hours while ensuring the highest standards of quality before these are brought to the stores. The food items also have longer shelf lives.

Atlas signs deal with Chinese firm

By Amy R. Nemo

ATLAS CONSOLIDATED MINING and Development Co. Inc. yesterday said its subsidiary has signed a memorandum of understanding with a Chinese firm on put up a nickel-cobalt leaching plant in the Boyong mine in Palawan.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, Atlas said Boyong Nickel Corp., where it holds a 25 percent stake, signed the agreement yesterday with Jiangxi Rare Earth and Rare Metals Tungsten Group Co. Ltd. (JXTC).

State-owned JXTC is the biggest tungsten and rare metals mining and processing company in the world.

According to Atlas, the agreement covers a joint-venture memorandum agreement for a plant with an annual capacity of 3,000 to 6,000 tons of mixed nickel-cobalt hydroxide product.

"The entire nickel-cobalt by-products product would be sold to JXTC under a long-term, off-take agreement and will reflect international market prices linked to the [London Metal Exchange] nickel and cobalt price, "it said.

JXTC will fund the entire capital cost of the leach plant and associated infrastructure in exchange for a guaranteed long-term tonnage agreement.

Boyong chief executive officer George J. Hallos earlier said that for heap leaching operations, the company would need to shell out at least P500 million.

Atlas also disclosed that JXTC would fund the feasibility study as well to arrange a qualified Chinese engineering company to manage the contract.

The company said the planned demonstration plant, which will require up to 800,000 tons a year of laterite ore feed, replaces a pilot plant of the same capacity originally planned in he South in China under the agreement previously signed for the development of the Ipilan deposit.

"Detailed metallurgical testing in China will be required over the next six months to define the optimum flow sheet for the demonstration plant," Atlas explained. "This in turn will define the best leach technology"

Asia stocks rise as bargains sought

Global equity markets headed for sixth straight month of losses

HONG KONG—ASIAN STOCKS rose for a sixth consecutive day yesterday, led by commodity-related shares in Hong Kong and Australia as bargain-hunting investors hoped policy changes would eventually drive up demand for raw materials.

Still, global equity markets were set for a record sixth consecutive losing month, with sentiment hurt by weakening economies in China and Japan as well as mounting political risks in India, where the end of a surge in Mumbai-approved investment, and in Thailand, where the prime minister has declared a state of emergency in Bangkok airports overtaken by protesters.

Stock markets in Britain were set to open in much as 1.4 percent higher, while France and Germany was seen 0.3 to 0.5 percent lower, according to financial bookmakers, as investors weighed value against gloomy economic prospects.

"On a range of measures, there is undoubted value to be found in many of the world's equity markets," said Sarah Arkle, chief investment officer at BT. "The undeniably most Managements.

"However, with economic and earnings repercussions in a state of flux, there are also significant risks," as he said in a note on the outlook for 2009.

The yield on the benchmark 10-year US Treasury note fell to 3.38% on Friday, its lowest in at least five decades, as dealers anticipated a deep and lasting US recession. The sort of investments against a US government debt default, an unthinkable event, hit record highs on Thursday, as concern grows about the scale of programs to prop up the financial system.

Japan's Nikkei three average ended up 1.7 percent higher, Gains thanks to the technology sector, such as Hitachi Corp, whose shares were benefiting after the company said it would buy back its own shares, pushed the index higher for a second day.

However, shares of Panasonic Corp., the world's largest plasma TV maker, were 11 percent lower after it slashed its net profit forecast for the current business year by 90 percent.

The MSCI index of Asia Pacific stocks outside of Japan climbed 2 percent, putting it on track for a sixth day of gains. The index was still locked in a steep downward trend that has knocked it down about 37 percent so far this year.

The all-country world stocks index was down 7.5 percent in November, having dropped every month since May.

That is the largest string of monthly losses since Bernanke was installed in 1966.

Companies involved with commodity production, such as mining firm BHP Billiton and offshore oil operator CNOOC, rallied after aggressive interest rate cuts in China and recent packages in Europe and the United States made investors more confident industrial demand will soon recover.

Australia's benchmark share index rose 9.5 percent in the week to Friday, its biggest two weekly gains, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index climbed 9.4 percent in the week.

Reuters

A PEDESTRIAN walks past a sale sign on Oxford Street in central London. Retailers are slashing prices this weekend to help boost sales in the run-up to Christmas. REUTERS

Japan output, consumer spending down

SINGAPORE—JAPAN'S INDUSTRIAL OUTput and household spending tumbled in October, evoking memories of the devastating stagnation of the 1990s and highlighting how rapidly the global financial crisis was dragging the world economy.

The speed at which Japanese companies were slashing production and consumers were reining back their spending, surprised economists and suggested the world's second biggest economy was in for a deeper and longer recession than earlier thought.

"Production is falling much faster than we had expected. Companies are cutting their production very quickly," said Takumi Tsutsuda, senior economist at Mizuho Corporate Research.

The Japanese data challenged the view of some investors that markets have already fully discounted the economic downturn's severity and it was time to pick up overseas bargains.

Economy government head Kaoru Yosano after the Stock numbers.

Japan's industrial output fell 11 percent in October, more than expected, with a drop more than twice as big predicted for November, while household spending fell 3.4 percent from a year earlier, also more than expected.

The data underscored Japan's yawning decline for a full year, which would be the country's longest ever contraction.

This, coupled with declines in household spending and retail sales and eroding confidence, raised the prospect of the return of deflation—a vicious circle of falling prices leading a drop in demand in anticipation of even lower prices ahead.

"Japan is getting closer to the status of deflation and the nation's economy will further deteriorate without doubt," said Masamichi Adachi, senior economist at JP Morgan Securities.

Reuters

Oil falls to $53 ahead of meet

SINGAPORE—OIL FELL TOWARD $53A barrel yesterday, ending the month down more than 20 percent, as Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) ministers prepared to meet in Cairo to discuss persistent further supply cuts in the global economic slowdrum cuts into oil demand.

The Opec, which is to hold an informal meeting today in Cairo, is struggling to reduce output but enough to keep your wells a recessionary reduction in fuel demand in the Price that has sent crude prices down nearly two-thirds since July.

US light sweet for January delivery fell as $53.51 based system day morning, having fallen by more than $1 earlier, and down 92 cents from its settlement on Wednesday. The Nymex trading floor was closed on Thursday in the United States for the Thanksgiving Day holiday, though Globex trading continued.

London Brent crude settled 79 cents lower on Thursday at $53.13. It was down 32 cents at $52.96.

"We are waiting for Opec. Some of the member countries are pushing for a cut but there is not susceptible to consuming countries. It is too early to see if economic confidence is returning," said Tetsu Emori, fund manager at Astmax Co., Ltd.

Oil prices have fallen to more than a fifth this month, adding to last month's more than 32 percent fall, which was the biggest monthly drop ever.

Several Opec delegates have said in the run-up to this latest gathering that it was likely only to meet next March, with the next Opec meeting in September and leave a decision on a further reduction until its next policy-setting meeting on Dec. 17 in Algeria.

But Shoki Ghanem, the head of the Libyan Opec delegation, said another informal meeting could not be ruled out and asserted that oil prices may have further to fall before a rebound.

Opec's 11 members slashed a combined 1.4 million barrels daily, 7.3 percent of its production, at two meetings in the past two months.

Opec members and non-members including Iraq and Ecuador will drop 340,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the first week to Dec. 13 on their former level this year, an oil analyst at the trade Sukeo Bowo said on Thursday. Reuters

US stores court careful shoppers on Black Friday

NEW YORK—STORES ACROSS THE United States hope to ring in billions of dollars in holiday sales beginning on Friday, but shoppers concerned about a dwindling economy have vowed to cut in their spending.

The holiday weekend will test the strength of consumer sentiment, a main driver of the US economy, as the country fares to recover financial crisis since the Great Depression.

Most shoppers are expected to go on "Black Friday," the day after Thanksgiving, viewed during spread their dollars on Thursday, aiming to capture business even Indian Americans started their traditional holiday meal with family or friends.

The holiday shopping season runs through year-end, with the Black's share of sales made by Christmas Day in Dec. 25.

Retailers fear a looming recession and mounting job losses could cost them dearly during the period that brings in up to 40 percent of annual sales. Many started offering steep discounts on everything from clothes to electronic weeks in advance of Thanksgiving.

Retailers, from discounter Wal-Mart Stores Inc. to department store operator Macy's and electronics retailer Best Buy were due to start their big sales to the early hours of Friday.

Experts ponder this would be the worst sales season since the early 1990s as consumers hit by a housing slump and credit crunch cut spending on nearly everything but necessities.

"Consumer spending in gifts for the holiday season is going to be down considerably," said Eric Andersen, professor of marketing at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University in Illinois. Many retailers, desperate to move more like Macy's to specialty chains such as Nordstrom Stores, are hoping to retain loyal customers and shows a profit as deals cut prices up to 40 and 50 percent. Some are willing to sacrifice margins rather than risk losing clients for good.

"Retailers, who have helped lure sales at major US stores, are also pulling back as the dollar savagely cuts into a global financial crisis efforts to promote customers.

"It's absolutely a guilty thing when I hand over my money," said Janet Brown, who was visiting from Scotland. "I think, 'Should I be doing it?'"

Retail sales at US stores open at least a year could fall 2.2 percent for November, compared with 4-percent growth last year found on analysis of records compiled by Thomson Reuters.

Excluding expectations for growth at discounter Wal-Mart, the anticipated decline in even steeper at 6.6 percent.

Nearly 40 percent of consumers plan to shop during the Black Friday weekend, according to a survey by the International Council of Shopping Centers. More than 80 percent of those shoppers expect to visit a discount store, while 78 percent said they would head to a department store.

Some have chosen to save money by going to stores selling second-hand goods or even trying to bargain with staff for a discount. *Reuters*

VW pursues US assembly plant project

CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE—With hope she moves shaping the site of Volkswagen's \$1-billion assembly plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Europe's largest automaker said it has no regrets about announcing its arrival as an American employer in hard times.

"We have stuck with our goals of growing our sales in the US market," Volkswagen AG spokesperson Jill Bonner said. "The plant is critical to that."

Former Volkswagen announced plans to build the plant in July the global economy has been darkening. Following the housing, credit and financial crises in the United States, the possible collapse of General Motors Corp. or Chrysler LLC would likely drag down some auto suppliers and manufacturers of steel, tire, talcum, electronics and plastics.

Bratton said the company is "absolutely not" having any regrets about the timing of the Chattanooga plant. Volkswagen is also building assembly plants in Pamela and India.

South Korean carmaker Kia Motors Corp. plans to open an assembly plant at West Point, Georgia, in 2010, and Japanese company Toyota Motor Corp. said earlier this month that it is shelving new plans to open its own plant in Blue Springs, Mississippi, in 2010.

They will join other foreign automakers like Nissan Motor Co., Honda Motor Co. and BMW AG that have opened plants in the southeastern United States.

Not only are VW executives sounding optimist about the early 2009 groundbreaking for the Chattanooga plant that will employ about 2,000 people, they already have expanded the planned size of the site's paint shop to accommodate 1,000 vehicles per day instead of 850 vehicles perhaps as many as 2011.

"We expect to see a turn in the economy by the time these cars will be available," Bratton said.

The plant will be able to make 150,000 vehicles a year when it opens, but Volkswagen already is planning to start a second line in 2011 of a second plant that would increase capacity to 300,000 vehicles a year.

Building a new sedan in Chattanooga is part of VW's plan to expand sales in the United States to one million a year by 2018, or more than four times the number sold last year. *AP*

WB calls for help to poor nations

WASHINGTON—THE WORLD BANK ON Thursday called on donors to boost aid to poor nations hit by a financial crisis that is "not yet over, nothing" about G-8 & UN development conference this month.

Developing countries "find themselves at the mercy of a crisis not of their making," WB president Robert Zoellick said in a statement.

The World Bank said the G-7, representing the world's most developed nations, are currently \$50 billion short of the countries' promises to debt relief and increased aid made at a 2005 Gleneagles summit.

In a paper prepared for the conference to Hokkaido weekend, the World Bank said developing countries are facing a "perfect storm."

At a time of slowing world growth, investment in the poorest countries is expected to fund and fuel price rates, the leader said.

The World Bank's top economist Justin Yifu Lin stressed how "empowering developing and emerging countries is imperative."

"Helping nations pursue economic development and long-term prosperity should be the goal of development finance. We must not let short-term policy principals send that out-of-crisis," he said.

Earlier this month, the World Bank forecast its growth forecast for developing country economies to 4.5 percent for 2009 down a price projection of 6.4 percent in June, citing the financial turmoil, slower exports and weaker commodity prices.

Right now . . . developing economies were expected to rebound by 6.1 percent next year as the global economy slows to a meager 1-percent growth rate.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, with the help of Qatar, has summoned heads of state to Doha yesterday to discuss the global financial crisis ahead of a finance and development conference from Nov 29 to Dec. 2. *AFP*

RP medical tourism . . .

Foreign p11

business environment where only those who are invited can attend," Dayao said. "As such, they will have the undivided attention of their potential customers."

Philippine Health Tourism Management Corporate organizer Sara Kristiansen Dubrul, the country won the bidders host the WHTC-2009 partly because of an energy road in the Middle East to move to healthcare hub, particularly for Philippines.

Mahesh said that 52,000 medical tourists from the United Arab Emirates alone came to the Philippines last year compared to only 30,000 who went to Thailand.

He said a 2008 Globalyan study assessed the global health and wellness tourism to be worth \$40 billion, which is projected to grow to \$60 billion in 2012.

"The Asian market alone consists of 3.5 million medical tourists spending a daily average of \$392 compared with the \$144 of regular inbound visitors," Mahesh said.

Invited to the WHTC—which focuses on sports medicine, wellness, medical and cosmetic treatments—are hotels, spas and health resorts, airlines and air ambulance companies, medical services agents, inbound tour operators specializing in health tourism, and general and specialist hospitals and clinics.

Seven priority among medical establishments are those targeted in cosmetic dentists, plastic surgery and orthopedic and sports medicine.

Landbank, SSS selling Meralco stakes

Foreign p11

more shares in Meralco but merely said "not yet" when asked. It is now specifically looking at the stakes of GHC in the power retailer.

"Who should we look out for? We (Meralco) a good deal," Ang said, despite the uncertainty facing Meralco in securing government approval for a power rate increase.

Atlantic why Landbank was selling its stake in Meralco, Pico said: "We can use it (proceeds) for funding priority loans."

"There is interest, which will be paid to installments, so effectively, we're selling it at P80 (a share)," she said.

Wealth Securities analyst Bernard Antonio meantime said that should SMC decide to acquire the stake of GHC in Meralco, this would trigger a tender offer as "requirement under Philippine securities laws to buy out shares held by minority shareholders unless a certain investor or group of investors buys at least 33 percent in a publicly held company.

Industry source said the Lopez family owns about 34 percent of Meralco.

As of Sept. 30, the top 40 stockholder of Meralco are PCD Nominee Corp. (held by brokers or institutional investors), which owns nearly half of undisclosed local clients) with 46.35 percent, First Philippine Union Steam Inc. with 23.7 percent, First Philippine Holdings Corp. with 9.5 percent, Ang Sa Ipunan Inc. with 3.94 percent, Landbank with 3.76 percent, Meralco Pension Fund with 2.18 percent, Board of Administrators of Employees Retirement Plan of Meralco with 1.97 percent, Philippine Health Insurance Corp. with 0.27 percent and the Home Development Mutual Fund with 0.18 percent.

People, Events & Products

Lilia Anne Espinosa

32nd National Milo Marathon climaxes in Manila

TWENTY-THREE CITIES NATIONwide, thousands of labourers and hundreds of thousands of participants after the first starting gun was fired in Batangas City early this year, the 32nd National Milo Marathon comes to an exciting and successful close in Manila on Nov. 26 in the Quirino Grandstand.

This year's National Milo Marathon showcased another milestone in its rich history when the country's first-ever simultaneous races were held in the cities of Visayas, Cebu, Davao and Tarlac on Aug. 3. The races attracted more than 60,000 runners, much more than the expected 60,000 turnout.

Aside from Manila, Cebu, Davao and Tarlac, other cities that have played host to the National Milo Marathon this year include Batangas, Bulacan, Angeles, General Santos, Dumaguete, Bacolod, Iloilo, Roxas, Legaspi, Naga, San Pablo, Tacloban, Tagbilaran, San Fernando, Cabanatuan, Pagadian, Butuan and Cagayan de Oro.

Over the years, the National Milo Marathon has truly shown that running has become part of the Filipino lifestyle. Marathon glory was a stake in the 42K race in the top three finishers in the men's and women's 21-30 categories, and the qualifiers from the 42K Manila elimination race will vie for the honor of being named this year's Marathon King and Queen, plus trophies and P75,000 each.

Complementing the 42K race are the 10K, 5K and 2K runs, an interschool running competition, biggest school delegation, and three dance competition, which is now open to college students. Trophies and cash prizes will likewise be awarded to the winners.

The country's passion for marathon remains vibrant than ever as the National Milo Marathon continues to serve as a catalyst in discovering and developing the country's best runners while encouraging scores of Filipinos to embrace a healthy lifestyle.

The 32nd National Milo Marathon is held in partnership with Bayview Park Hotel Manila, adidas, the Department of Tourism, and Manila Water.

JOLLIBEE, STRATWORKS WIN PHILIPPINE QUILL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Jollibee and its PR agency Stratworks recently won a Philippine Quill Award of Excellence from the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) for the leading fastfood company's 30th anniversary PR campaign, 30Wow: Celebrating 30 Years of Langhap Sarap with the Jollibee Family. The awards ceremony was held at Hyatt Hotel in Manila and is now set to IABC's Asia Pacific Philippine Gold class and Marketing VP and director Elyd Zuno, the Jollibee moment. Jollibee PR for marketing Enid E. Santiago, Stratworks managing director Bonna Manese-Conde and PR director Dennis Nonselo; IABC Philippines president and PR Gold co-chair Veronica Tayko-Minh; and IABC International chair Barbara Gibson. Stratworks was one the most awarded agencies at the ceremonies, receiving a total of 7 Philippine Quill awards for its communications campaigns for its clients Jollibee, MF Philippines and the Singapore Tourism Board.

ABICC HOLDS BIG ANNUAL CONCERT

The Ateneo Brahms Concert Choir (ABCC) led by renowned composer Jerry A. Dadap (standing, second from left) will perform its big annual concert at Nov. 26, Brahms in Cebu, at the Philamlife Theatre on 6th Ave., Manila. The choir has a unique repertoire of religious hymns, patriotic anthems, classical-nostalgic non-songs, and original arrangements. Also performing is the Ateneo Concert Ensemble led by Lucinio Benedicto Jr. Inquiries call 1-15 at 631-1-4002. The concert is dedicated to the youth of the land.

Food firm champions child development in CSR program

LEADING MEAT PROCESSING FIRM CDO-Foodsphere Inc has strengthened the focus of its corporate social responsibility (CSR) program on child development, with the launching of a groundbreaking educational television show called Barang Bibbo!

Known for its inspirational feeding program that has helped nourish more than 5,000 previously undernourished kids in poor areas in Metro Manila, CDO-Foodsphere is producing a TV program, this time to feed the mind of Filipino children with knowledge and proper values.

Barang Bibbo! is a weekly 30-minute interactive show specifically designed for TV-literate children with ages three to six years. It is aired over ETC's TV every Saturday from 8:30 to 9 a.m.

In 2004, CDO-Foodsphere established Odyssey Foundation, its corporate social responsibility arm that quickly addressed various problems on address social concerns such as child malnutrition.

Odyssey Foundation manned a supplemental feeding project three years ago, which has since helped 5,000 previously undernourished kids in Valenzuela City.

Aside from proper nutrition, CDO-Foodsphere acknowledges the importance of Filipino children, which should begin at home. With this in mind, CDO-Foodsphere forged an agreement with leading broadcast network GMA 7 to bring to Filipino homes enough television an innovative educational show for children.

The lively show will follow a storytelling design by educational experts that will concentrate on Filipino language development and moral instruction. This pioneering show seeks to boost the proper use of Filipino language in conversation and in learning.

Aptly titled Barang Bibbo!, the show chronicles the adventures of boy and girl hand puppets Bi and Bo in a learning place called Bibbolandia, as they seek answers, discover new worlds, unlock mysteries and discover their abilities.

The show is guaranteed to appeal to preschool kids as well as to older children because of its wonderful mix of puppetry, live actors, animations, artistic graphics, special effects and wonderful storytelling.

A live-action character called Ate Anne will accompany Bi and Bo as their coach on their learning adventures. She provides discipline, guidance, stability and knowledge that Bi and Bo need in their new discoveries.

The informative show aims to enhance the holistic development of the children, who are expected to learn lessons on learning creatively, respect and other positive values from watching the story of Bi and Bo.

It is known first in the sense that it engages the young audiences to think in order to solve riddles and learn new words as well as ideas.

CIRCLE OF 10 GIRLS INVADE LOCAL STORES

More and more shoppers are caught on tape buying Palmolive shampoo, conditioner and soap. You could be the next winner to be treated sheer by these lovely Circle of 10 girls in Palmolive's Shining Shopper' promo. Watch out for them in supermarkets, groceries and more at your favorite sari-sari stores. These girls are still searching for shoppers nationwide and when they chance upon you purchasing Palmolive products, you automatically win P10,000 and get a chance to appear on national TV. Promo period ends until Dec 14 only.

A FIGHT AGAINST COUNTERFEIT MEDICINES

Gaining lines through thousands of pharmacies, the Philippine Coalition of Drugstore Health Committees joined the members of the Samahan Laban sa Pekeng Gamot as they aim to spread the word against the proliferation of counterfeit medicines. In a drive of a cause-oriented walk down an area dubbed as "Lakad Laban sa Pekeng Gamot." Some four thousand pro and non pro athletes supported the advocacy. In the photo are (from left) Albert C. Mabel, country chairman and president of Pfizer Phils, Raymund Asuncion, COO of Unilab Pharma; Jane Villaluna, general manager of Janssen Pharmaceutica; Ven Pio Dy-Liacco, Bella Pharma; and Ramon Lopez, president of Biotoxin; Mila Lagunsa, president of Philippine Pharmacists Association; and Paul Lorenzo, assistant director general of GMA Network Inc.

AL FRANCIS CHUA CHOOSES BLUE WATER DAY SPA

At Francis Chua, basketball fanatic, coach and trainer says that total relaxation is by maintaining the body's balance and keeping it at optimum performance. As it seems, rich experience in coaching has much to do with the most respected authorities in the sporting world. Al Francis currently practices what he preaches by keeping a regular de-stressing time to help him cope with the demands of his career and active lifestyle. So, to get his much-needed rest, Al Francis goes to Blue Water Day Spa. He frequents Blue Water Day Spa for the Swedish Massage and for its facial treatment. Blue Water Day Spa offers the best facials for men because it uses the most sophisticated roller and facial care machines that are the most expensive in the drugstore products. Blue Water Day Spa has branches in Greenhills, Makati, Mother Ignacia, Session City and Alabang. For branches inquiries, you may call 584-3018.

FOTOH AMBULANCE NOW SERVICING TAGUIG CITY

Unlike 3 Color Motor Corp. delivered 2 units of Foton Ambulance to the city government of Taguig. The vehicles will be used for medical emergency requirements by the local government. Ben Chan, the Ambulance is equipped for the local with its powerful 2.4 liter turbocharged diesel engine, high-roof design, and complete accessories including shoulder, stretcher, and ramp, siren, ventilator, medical cabinet, oxygen tanks, bottle hanger, etc. Picture shows Wilfredo Villar, Taguig City Administrator (left) shaking hands with Ben Chan, Foton general manager. Jun Olave (right). Also present in the activity but not in the picture is Dr. Rolando Pao, Taguig City Health Officer.

PRODUCT FILES

Procyanidin lighters melasma

BASED ON SEVERAL DEVELOPED TRIALS, Procyanidin from French Maritime Pine Bark Extract (Pycnogenol®) proves to be a very potent anti-oxidant. It is 50 times more potent than Vitamin E and 20 times more effective than Vitamin C. Pharmacist-Clinical Nutritionist from Mega Lifesciences, is the only oral medication for melasma or pakas that has procyanidin as one of its active ingredients found to MEGA (Melasma Skin Clear Complexion) Complex, a unique, all natural anti-oxidant formula that attacks pakas. Procyanidin targets Vitamins C and E in the body for its ability to produce a more potent antioxidant effect decreasing the intensity of melasma. The desired outcome would be smooth, elastic, and pakas-free skin. Taking 2 capsules a day for at least 8 weeks of Pycnogenol 40 Activeone can lighten your Pakas safely, conveniently, and economically. For more information on Procyanidin, call Pharmacist Hotline 894-1111 or see your dermatologist about it.

Charmee keeps Sarah Geronimo confident

SARAH GERONIMO RECENTLY concluded concert "The Best Day" at the Araneta Coliseum and fans & was very successful as celebrities and fans alike were in full attendance. Charmee Jardeleza, Sarah Geronimo's personal assistant, The Pop Princess sang song after song all throughout her concert without missing a beat and her dance moves were also applauded by the audience as she grooved to the beat this. Charmee believes Sarah can achieve more in the years to come because Charmee Feminine Protection products are those to keep her company.

Charmee takes care of Sarah Geronimo's feminine protection needs so she can stay comfortable, protected and worry-free as she dishes more to reach her dreams

New form of glucosamine approved by BFAD

WHICH RECENTLY ISSUED AN APPROVAL FOR product registration of Poly-NAG, a new form of glucosamine that is primarily used to treat arthritis. Poly-NAG is polymeric N-acetyl-D-glucosamine, a new form of glucosamine that targets glucosamine that is proven to provide sustained delivery of glucosamine to joints and connective tissues. Poly-NAG was proven to provide sustained delivery of glucosamine longer compared to other forms of glucosamine. Days after this patients stopped taking Poly-NAG, blood samples were taken and glucosamine levels were substantially higher in the Poly-NAG group compared to the group that took plain glucosamine. Poly-NAG is 500mg/pill & is for easing inflammation and is available in leading drugstores nationwide. Poly-NAG is marketed locally by Pascual Laboratories Inc.

PBA player discovers fuel efficient vehicle

PBA PLAYER ARWIND SANTOS, advises the compact Toyota Vios despite his towering physique. The 6in 2in Fremont native, the Toyota Vios is fuel efficient, spacious, able after test driving the vehicle for a week. The VVT-i (Variable Valve Timing with Intelligence) technology allows power for secret station, superior fuel economy, and cleaner exhaust emissions. The fuel efficiency of the Toyota Vios is also approved by the country's fleet and pioneering automobile, the Automobile Association of the Philippines (AAP).

JUNIOR RIDGE PRESENTS CMMA TROPHY

The start of junior Ridge presented the CMMA trophy to Ramon Magsaysay Mayor Abner San Pedro last Nov. 13. Enjoy the fifth CMMA trophy were by Fleuf Southridge. The winning team was presented by Lauren Kalighaut, Rachel was edition-in-chief of junior Ridge awarded trophy there with last year's editor-in-chief, Justin Morales, Al Valerio, Jam Corrinne and Bebi Gaviola contributing writers and Diane Ramos, moderator.

BRINGING WORLD-CLASS CARE TO FOREIGN RETIREES

The Manila Doctors Hospital recently signed an agreement with the Philippine Retirement Authority. Shown in photo are (from left) Senator Pilar Ramos Ajuncy, MDH hospital director; Thelma B. Puga, PRA OIC for marketing and Dr. Ben Mendoza, MDH administrative director. As mentioned previous, MDH offers special discounts on medical services to PRA ID holders. For information you may contact the Manila Doctors Hospital at 524-3011 or send an email: info@maniladoctors.com.ph

HCG 'I CAN LIVE HERE' AT PHILCONSTRUCT 2006

HCG formally opened the doors of the 18th Philippine International Construction Equipment and Building Materials Exhibition, Philconstruct 2006 recently at the Philippine Trade Training Center in Pasay City. Joining the ribbon-cutting ceremony held by Philconstruct 2006 chairman Jose Ma. Lopez, PCCI president Antonio Cabangon-Chua, Philconstruct chairman Larry Luyaris, PMEA-II immediate past president Cielo Rodriguez and HCG senior sales manager David Chang.

NOVARTIS HOLDS SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIUM AT SMX

Dr. Giuseppe Gaglio (3rd from left), professor of internal medicine and director of the division of internal medicine and hematology, Sacco Land Hospital, University of Turin in Italy, spoke during a scientific symposium organized by leading Swiss research-based healthcare company Novartis in cooperation with the 9th International Conference of the Asian Pacific Association of Society Held recently at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City. Photo shows (from left) Novartis sales and brand specialist Mario Segala; Novartis senior brand manager Hector Lorenzo; Novartis marketing assistant and Ms. Grey Tolu (Phil. Society of Hematology and Blood Transfusion president) Prof. Dr. Nandina Anastacio's symposium chair Dr. Purnelle Torres; Novartis head medical affairs Dr. Clarissa Sy and Phil. Society of Hematology and Blood Transfusion vice president Dr. Allan Robert Pacho.

SCIENCE/HEALTH

Lito Cesar D. Magsaysay

Beating diabetes through biking

Text and photo by Charles E. Rabor

FOR AS LONG AS HE could remember, Antonio Madrid spent his early years always fighting to keep his diabetes at bay, monitoring his glucose, taking his medications regularly, jogging as well as cutting down on certain types of foods have been a part of his regular routine.

Then four years ago, the 64-year-old retiree from Bonifacio, Makati City decided to add another to his repertoire of healthy behaviors: riding a bicycle.

"You are never too old to create a lifestyle you, I always hear him say. I believe from because of still remember values he had to visit me twice a week [at] to make sure everything is fine. But after he started biking, his diabetes improved significantly that I rarely require him to see me at least every three months," attested Dr. Josephine Carlos Rabosa, president of the Philippine Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism.

Indeed, Madrid is just one of Rabosa's patients who have discovered the joys and benefits of riding a bike.

While biking has muscular and cardiovascular benefits as well as being an economically and ecologically expedient means to move around, it is also a great for one's knees and ankles that were no longer be able to take the pounding from jogging and even walking.

"Most many people know that biking could also help delay if not prevent the onset of full-blown diabetes," Rabosa explained.

Alarmed at the unprecedented rise in incidence of diabetes in the Philippines, particularly in the younger group, the DSEM created last year www.pedaling and advocating biking around the country's major cities.

Both this month, the DSEM successfully staged the 2nd Go Bike Filipino in Bacolod City, Negros Occidental as part of celebrating World Diabetes Day which was declared by the International Diabetes Federation and the World Health Organization last year to be every 14th of November.

A thousand bikers

"The first Go Bike Filipino was in midnovember held last year in Metro Manila and in cities of Cagayan de Oro and Bacolod. This year, we concentrated in Bacolod where we were able to gather a thousand bikers of all ages, even those with diabetes," Rabosa reported.

The purpose of Go Bike Filipino is to underscore the proper diet and regular exercise, like biking, in order to curb down the rising epidemic of obesity and diabetes, and other lifestyle diseases, such as high bad cholesterol and triglyceride levels which lead to heart diseases, hypertension and osteoporosis.

The doctor reported that based on a recent national survey, 20.6 percent or one out of every five adult Filipinos (20 years old and above) suffer from diabetes.

RABOSA

"This is an alarming rise from the same national survey result done in 1998 that found 3.9 percent of the adult population had diabetes," said Rabosa.

Prime reasons

According to the doctor, obesity, sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy diet are among the prime reasons for getting diabetes, aside from genetic inheritance.

"Of late, however, people as young as 20 years have fallen prey to the type 2 diabetes, which was unheard to the last decade," Rabosa said.

Type 1 diabetes is a condition where the consumer loses the ability to make insulin, whereas type 2 (diabetes mellitus), the insulin secretion from the pancreas is below optimal level.

Scientific basis

In fact, PHEN's bike advocacy has scientific basis. A University of South Australia study showed that people with type 2 diabetes might be better off choosing biking to exercise.

The study, published in the latest issue of the British Medical Journal, found that people who took up cycling were more likely to control their blood glucose levels than those who took up walking or jogging.

Researchers from the same university also found that people with diabetes who took up cycling were more likely to control their blood glucose levels than those who took up walking or jogging.

Besides biking, like taking the stair-daily Lantin offers a significant help to adults and children (8 years and older) with type 1 diabetes or adult patients with type 2 diabetes who require insulin that could be readily released over a 24-hour period.

"Diabetics should now realize that their condition is all about the balance between the food they eat, the medications they take and the exercise they do. Changing any one of these things upsets the 'triad' so to speak," she reminded.

Rabosa explained that regular pedaling for 30 minutes daily, if not more, would not only help burn more than a thousand calories a week, but would also mobilize the blood sugar and make the cells more responsive to insulin.

Insulin is used by the body to move the glucose obtained from food from the bloodstream into cells throughout the body, which then use the glucose for energy.

"Of course we always tell our patients not to forget their medications, even if they feel much better. If you have type 1 diabetes, insulin therapy replaces the insulin your body is unable to produce. Insulin therapy is sometimes needed for type 2 diabetes when other therapies have failed in keeping blood glucose levels within the desired range," Rabosa reminded.

Insulin therapy, like taking the once-daily Lantus offers a significant help to adults and children (8 years and older) with type 1 diabetes or adult patients with type 2 diabetes who require insulin that could be readily released over a 24-hour period.

"Diabetics should now realize that their condition is all about the balance between the food they eat, the medications they take and the exercise they do. Changing any one of these things 'upsets the triad' so to speak," she reminded.

Dr. Renato Dantes: dying in line of duty

By Rahel R. Cardilo

DR. RENATO DANTES, ONE OF the country's top lung specialists, died with his boots on. "If it's any consolation to me and our children," his wife Jo Ellaguirre told friends during the vigil, "he died in the line of duty."

Two, as friends and family fondly call him, were always known by friends and colleagues for his selfless commitment to his various advocacies. Although "Doc was a good leader and was able to motivate many colleagues in the advocacies he supported, he personally did many things on his own without much fanfare. All you knew: Out of his discrete manner to help. And made a difference to people who would never be able to pay him back for his kindness.

Respiratory health woes

As a past president of the Philippine College of Chest Physicians and a prime mover of the Philippine Coalition Against Tuberculosis (Philcat), he was instrumental in forging tighter and more effective collaboration between the private and public sectors to curb what they called the major pulmonary "Three Big Burdens." In one of their joint endeavors, they finally declared the gains they have achieved against tuberculosis, pneumonia, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases, which are the country's four major respiratory health problems.

"With the significant misbehaving undertakings by both the private and public sectors together, are still basically the challenges with these Three Big Burdens," Doc told the audience in his opening speech during the PCCP-Philcat joint convention.

He served weeks before his death, he had covered out-of-town assist, including mosquito-infested areas, to conduct their projects for Philcat. Mayors would always remind him to use mosquito repellants and take other precautions, but he was apparently overwhelmed with the scope of his endeavor in these poor areas, and the little time he and his team had to accomplish it. No time left to take whatever precautions he needed to protect himself.

DANTES

PHAP
Innovations

Revolutionary vaccine will soon prevent dengue

Dengue fever is one of the most widespread tropical diseases in the world. It kills roughly 24,000 people—mostly children and infants—up to 100 million each year.

In the Philippines, the National Epidemiology Center reports that dengue accounted for 407 deaths and 43,958 infections in 2007, making it the worst dengue year for the country.

Removed virtually, dengue may soon become preventable thanks to a vaccine being developed by scientists at the pharmaceutical industry.

Promising dengue vaccine

While there is still no vaccine for dengue, the various vaccine candidates for dengue fever vaccine generated a strong antibody response against all four serotypes of the virus responsible for dengue fever in 140 percent of adults who participated in a United States clinical trial.

This major research and development breakthrough prompted scientists to immediately expand ongoing clinical trials in Asia and Latin America this year. Scientists are expected to submit the vaccine to health authorities for registration in 2012.

The tetravalent dengue candidate vaccine is based on a new technology incorporating the protein envelopes that provide immunity against the four other types responsible for dengue fever and the more severe forms of the disease, dengue hemorrhagic fever (DHF) and dengue shock syndrome.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne disease characterized by fever, rash, headache and muscle aches. DHF, on the other hand, is a severe and potentially fatal form of dengue that is a leading cause of hospitalization among children. DHF causes hemorrhage, shock and, if left untreated, death in up to 10% of cases.

Synergy from a mosquito bite

Dengue is caused by four distinct but closely related viruses (serotypes 1-4) that are transmitted by the bite of the Aedes aegypti mosquito. Recovery from infection caused by one virus type provides lifelong immunity against that serotype, but only partial and transient protection against subsequent infections by the other three serotypes.

Sanofi Global disease prevention

Developing an efficient intervention requires and making it available to people living in countries where the dengue threat to prevention is therefore the first step to achieve true global prevention of the disease and saving countless lives.

Around the world, healthcare companies have joined forces with research organizations to better understand and manage dengue infection and effectively intervene in its incidence.

In addition to improving diagnosis of dengue, efforts of these partnerships could also be instrumental in speeding up the discovery of an anti-viral drug effective against the dengue virus.

The Pharmaceutical & Healthcare Association of the Philippines is a group of pharmaceutical companies engaged in Research & Development to discover innovative, quality medicines that save and improve lives.

For more information, log on to: www.phap.org.ph

PHAP

Treating the sleepers

DISCOVER

Marnie Santos Balbin

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN RECORD, ACCORDING TO THE World Health Organization, scientists become infected with the bacteria that cause tuberculosis. In the October issue of the journal PLoS Genetics, researchers from the Genome Institute of Singapore identified a gene that might play a role in making people more susceptible to pulmonary tuberculosis.

A third of the population worldwide is infected, though the WHO says only 5 to 10 percent of those infected develop the disease. Approximately eight million tuberculosis cases develop annually, and two million people die each year.

Though there is a vaccine for tuberculosis and drugs to treat the disease, some of the bacterial strains have proved to be resistant against the medications. These drug-resistant strains have been found in every country.

Proposal

Most people are inoculated with the tuberculosis vaccine, most commonly known as the BCG shot, in childhood. Given the prevalence of the disease though, some researchers have proposed that the current vaccine may only protect those inoculated against specific bacterial strains.

In the December issue of the journal Infection and Immunity, researchers from the American Food and Drug Administration's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research examined the notion by showing the current tuberculosis vaccine doesn't offer strain-specific immunity.

The vaccine was tested on mice exposed to nine different TB strains and induced protective immunity against all of them. The data, wrote the researchers, "suggest that strain-specific resistance to BCG-induced protection immunity may be uncommon."

Researchers are developing new vaccine drugs to combat tuberculosis, some of which are already being tested on humans in clinical trials. While studying some of these newer drugs, researchers from the American National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, a division of the National Institutes of Health, and the Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases in Singapore figured out exactly how these potential new medicines actually combat drug-resistant tuberculosis.

The information could help researchers develop more directed drug treatments to cure the latest tuberculosis in 90 percent of those infected, and develop similar treatments against other disease-causing bacteria as well.

The report appeared in the Oct. 28 issue of the journal Science. The work was led by NIAID researcher Clifton Barry III.

No drug available

"Currently, there are no drugs available that specifically target latent tuberculosis infection in which bacteria are present but are not actively dividing," Dr. Clifton Anthony Barry head said in a statement.

"Their discovery is a promising step toward developing effective drugs against latent TB as well as other bacteria."

Barry and his colleagues aren't the first to find a way to treat the latent tuberculosis infections, though their findings are arguably the most recent. In October researchers at Edmund N. Louis University School of Medicine revealed that a drug currently in clinical trials for use against multidrug resistant strains had proved effective at killing latent bacteria. Their work appeared in the Journal of Infectious Diseases.

E-mail the author at mail@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Cesar D. Manganaan

PROPERTY

Unique offering in Boracay's top destination

By Charles E. Bahan

A TOP LANDMARK destination in Boracay Island has started a unique scheme that seeks to attract Filipinos as well as foreign investors to partake in the laid-back yet exciting lifestyle offered by this exclusive community.

Fil-Estate's Fairways & Bluewater Resort Golf and Country Club not only boasts of a world-class, par 72, 18-hole course or a variety of water sports facilities, this 226-hectare development located in the northwest side of the island (Newcomer) also offers several first-class condotel suites.

With a Certificate of Condominium Title, each buyer is assured of the exclusive privileges of using the unit for up to 38 days or four weeks per year for the rest of the year, the units, leased back to the developer, will be managed and operated as a hotel.

"This gives the owners a real income-generating, five-star property without the usual hassle of owning one. Imagine being able to return again and again to this dream destination each year while being assured of earning income from that same property while you are back working in the city," explained Melinda Medina, director of sales of Quantum Hotels and Resorts (www.quantumhotels.com), which manages Fairways & Bluewater Resort's Mulligan Golf Hotel (27 units), Balubaru Newcomer Villas (50 units) and The Villas on the 9th's Villa Isabel (18 units) and very soon, Villa Sofia.

Access

On top of this arrangement, unit owners will have access to all the exclusive facilities of Fairways & Bluewater Resort, including the golf course.

When it was inaugurated in 1997, the 6,463-yard course, designed by Australian master golfer and golf course architect Graham Marsh, became the third venue of the then-stop Asiatic Walker Super Tour.

"But aside from the golf course, the property will also allow unit owners to enjoy various water sports and activities including jet skiing, scuba diving, water skiing, snorkeling, yacht sailing, island-cruising, fishing, island cruising and wind surfing as well as land-based pursuits like visiting the butterfly farm, horse and bike riding and enjoying a complimentary shuttled ride to Boracay's D'Mall shopping center," Medina enumerated.

Unique enclaves

But even those who would rather choose to stay in their units would definitely enjoy the ambiences offered by the property's unique enclaves.

Living at the Mulligan Golf Hotel is a perfect way to enjoy all the aspects of the island as sun-lovers watch the day begin from the East beach or the magnificent sunset on the West beach.

Balubaru Newcomer Villas is another prestigious property that is spread along the fairways of holes No. 1, 2 and 9 and offers quick access to golf, spa, beach, sports and the white beach of Boracay.

Each room with an area of either 34.8 to 70 sq.m. each offers a tranquil and relaxed atmosphere, where everything one needs for true relaxation is laid before him or her: air-conditioning, cable TV, telephone, Internet access, queen size bed, coffee/tea maker and mini-bar.

98%

"The villas on the 9th stand in the most scenic location of the property as it is located along the 9th fairway of the only golf course in Boracay. Villa Isabel and Villa Sofia, both offering a view of the Siburan Bay, purchasers of the island's are designed to accommodate the discerning taste of holiday owners as each suites will be well appointed. The 58-sq.m. Superior rooms, the 80-sq.m. one-bedroom suites as well as the 130-sq.m. two-bedroom suites could accommodate families or groups without sacrificing privacy," Medina assured.

Medina added that owning any of the property's units allow one to enjoy as much as 90 percent share from net income of hotel operations, projecting a return on investment in an initial four to five years depending on the market condition.

"After 15 years, the unit owner will have the option to renew the lease for an additional 15 years to the hotel operators at rent is not on his own," Medina explained.

She reported that despite the spiraling cost of travel and the prevailing global economic slump, the Department of Tourism expects more foreign tourists to visit the country.

In the first quarter of the year, DOT reported that the local tourism industry has already generated earnings of $1.02 billion (P48.8 billion) with the continuing arrival of more foreign tourists to the country.

"The department is right when it said the country is in a much better position to attract investors in Europe and in other emerging markets, whose economies continue to grow. Boracay Island could be their best bet to put their money in," Medina said.

THE WORLD-CLASS golf course once hosted the prestigious Johnnie Walker Super golf tour.

MULLIGAN Golf Hotel is a perfect way to enjoy all the aspects of Boracay

EACH unit at the Balubaru Newcomer Villas offers a tranquil and relaxed atmosphere.

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Have you always wondered when you'll be able to set aside money to save up for that house you've always wanted? Or how you'll earn that extra buck to cover for that down payment you've been saving for? In an economic crisis, we often take the practical route and set aside the dream instead.

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Build your Dream

BPI FAMILY SAVINGS BANK

Paint to prevent deaths due to air pollution

PASIG, PASYA (BOMBOM) Philippines recently set the benchmark for environment-friendly coatings with the launch of Boysen KNOxOUT, activated by Catalyst Nanotechnology, at the Renaissance Hotel in Manila.

"Up to now, the focus of eco-friendly paints has been to minimize paint's negative effect on human health and the environment, through limiting levels of volatile organic compounds and prohibiting the use of hazardous chemicals," shared Johnson Ongking, vice president of Pacific Paint (Boysen) Philippines Inc.

"But the introduction of Boysen KNOxOUT changes the whole paradigm. Here, we actually have an innovative technology that's constantly working to clean the air. In effect, it transforms any painted surface into an air purifying device," he said.

"People used to think that paint formed up the air, and now we have a paint that actually purifies the air. It turns the whole concept of paint around," Ongking adds.

BOYSEN KNOxOUT

THE INNOVATION represented by Boysen KNOxOUT can go a long way to bring down NOx levels in the air.

"WE are very thankful and appreciative of the extensive support given by the DOTC-MRT3 and the MMDA for this trial," Johnson Ongking shared.

The everyday killer

A joint report of the World Bank and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources shows that there are nearly 5,000 premature deaths each year in Manila due to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases caused by exposure to poor air quality. Health concerns such as asthma, other lung infections, heart problems, cancer, central nervous system damage and lowered IQ increasingly affect city dwellers. What's worse is that no community within the metropolis is immune from the growing threat of Metro Manila's degraded air quality.

One of the most lethal air pollutants breathed-in are nitrogen oxide (NOx). Nitrogen oxide (NOx) is the generic term for a group of highly reactive gases all of which contain nitrogen and oxygen in varying amounts. As a precursor for fine particulate matter, ozone (smog) and acid rain, NOx can contribute to a variety of health problems such as asthma, chronic bronchitis and lung cancer. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that of the 6 principal air pollutants, NOx is the only one that has not decreased since the passage of the Clean Air Act in the United States.

In March 1999, the British Medical Journal quoted Dr. Miguel Cotileau, a pediatrician at the Makati Medical Center, who said: "About 90 percent of my patients have respiratory illness, and we're seeing babies as young as two months suffering from asthma. Twenty years ago, this was unheard of."

Solution in a can

The innovation represented by Boysen KNOxOUT can go a long way to bring down NOx levels in the air, reducing the health burden of Manila riders to the process. Activated by Crystal Nanotechnology, Boysen KNOxOUT is based on the nano sized titanium dioxide, which acts as a photocatalyst, triggering certain chemical reactions stimulated by light. Through this process, toxic emissions are broken down into harmless substances in an environmentally safe process.

"There's really not much a person can do at present to protect themselves from the effects of NOx in the air," says Ongking. "But now KNOxOUT will give Filipinos a weapon to fight air pollution. Painting your home with KNOxOUT will protect you and your family from the high air pollution levels and health problems that it brings," he adds.

Fighting air pollution

One of the initiatives that Boysen Pilipinas Philippines has taken is to launch Boysen KNOxOUT in the biggest outdoor depolluting paint trial in the world. "Before, the paint has only been tested in smaller European trials in schoolyards, tunnels or parking lots," shares Steve Parsons, senior technical advisor for CHAS Global.

"The Philippine trial is the first time that we've tested the product on such a large scale." The proposed testing site will be at the three-story Guadalupe MRT station and surrounding embankments," Parsons says.

THE PROPOSED testing site is the 3-story Guadalupe MRT station and surrounding embankments is the largest site for any outdoor depolluting trial.

The trial will involve testing pollution levels through paint samples, ambient levels and pollutant monitors to base line data during levels and determine the effective ness. BOYSEN KNOxOUT is employed. The Manila Observatory, the oldest scientific research institute in the country, is serving as independent observer and monitor for the trial. "We're very thankful and appreciative of the extensive support given by the DOTC-MRT3 and the MMDA for this trial. It shows that the DOTC-MRT3 and MMDA are innovative and committed player to improving air quality."

"Success in this endeavor will mark functional coatings as a viable and innovative way to fight air pollution. At the end of the day, what we really want is to be able to give consumers more than just a can of paint... we're giving them a weapon to fight against air pollution and protect their families," Ongking concludes.

7 high-rise residential condos to rise in Las Piñas City

SOUTHERN METRO MANILA is no longer as far away as it used to be. In fact, major industries have since secured their offices there. Unlike the busy center of Metro Manila, the area in the cities south of Metro Manila like in Las Piñas, enjoy an unhurried pace—so those seeking a less hurried lifestyle are seen considering moving here.

One of those high on the list of many families today is the Ghana Place, ORC's luxury first medium-rise residential development in Las Piñas. Ory Taking into consideration factors such as location and accessibility, it is the perfect home for families living in Las Piñas and Muntinlupa as well as the Cavite and Laguna areas seeking to upgrade their lifestyles. And with the resort ambience the development is offering, it is suited for those who desire a relaxed way of living.

Ghana Place is strategically located on the widening Coastal Road that runs from Las Piñas to the Alabang area in Muntinlupa. Some might find the address outstanding, but in terms of location, it is just a few minutes away from the posh-sibling residential area and major commercial districts of the Metro Manila south.

Located in a 3.15-hectare property Ghana Place will have seven buildings, each named after known locations and tourist destinations in Hawaii. The references to Hawaii isn't anything coincidental. But the property's ambiance, from its aerial perspective, resembles the islands of Hawaii.

Hawaiian theme

The entire property is Hawaiian-inspired, with the laidback and tropical lifestyle of Hawaii the main inspirations for the property. Residents will feel close to nature with the resort maintenance they will find at Ghana Place.

Unlike with the Hawaiian theme, the mid-rise residential buildings will follow a modern Polynesian design. Buildings will be in neutral earth colors to complement the greens throughout the property. It contains areas such as the Luau Pavilion (Grand Clubhouse), natural materials and tented Hatches are used to bring a sense of warmth, while traditional tiki-inspired artworks serve as accent pieces.

Four unit types are available to suit the needs of residents. There are 21-square-meter studio units, two-bedroom units with floor areas from 42, 49.5, 51 to 80 sq m, three-bedroom units and smallest units with measuring 84 sq m.

MORE and more Filipinos are now choosing to live the modern lifestyle in vertical villages that were actually considered before as a luxury privilege.

RESIDENTS can enjoy familiar and convenient comforts in a grander way at a modern and exclusive residential high-rise condominium.

Recreational amenities

There's no need to drive away on weekends to spend quality time with the family. Ghana Place has a Grand Clubhouse surrounded by various recreation amenities.

Inside the Luau Pavilion (Grand Clubhouse) is a lounge area, an air-conditioned function room with a kitchen, fitness gym with a dance area, a recreation hall, entertainment room, a veranda overlooking the pool area, convenience store, laundry pickup booth and some rooms.

Outdoors, there are adult and kiddie pools complete with a natural stream highlighted by water cascades and decks, a sunbathing deck, basketball court, cabanas with grill pits, a children's playground and pocket parks and gardens spread out throughout the property.

As in all developments by the Ayala Group, there is a Property Management Office that handles security and general upkeep of the property. The services it offers include 24-hour security with trained personnel, general maintenance, common area, move in assistance, utilities application, utilities and utility bill payment service, and many more in service, and even organizing community events.

Breathing Spaces

Life's fit to a tee at 8 Forbes Town Road

YOU CAN CALL IT A MATCH made in golf heaven. 8 Forbes Town Road Golf View Residences, Megaworld Corp.'s 55-story luxury condominium, was designed to draw lovers of the game by treating them with grand views of the Manila Golf & Country Club.

Located at the five-hectare cosmopolitan hub of Forbes Town Center inside Bonifacio Global City, the sleek structure built from blue vision glass and steel promises the longest golf course views, since Forbes Town Center borders Manila Golf for more than half a kilometer.

"8 Forbes Town Road offers investors and future residents the last opportunity to have sweeping views of the greens from their windows and from our luxurious amenities deck," said Megaworld SVP for Marketing and project head Nell Hernandez. "This is their last opportunity sooner for the taking."

16 amenities

The landmark is found in front to on the premise, as its interiors are as impressive as the outdoor vistas. In the words at the pleasure zone on the seventh floor are 16 different amenities that appeal to other active hobbyists. Water therapy via water jets will be offered to residents at the outdoor spa and shallow pool. For the more adventurous, an infinity pool that appears jutting across the greens awaits.

If you want to stay on familiar ground, there are landscape and roof gardens for joggers. The technology and tai-chi routine are other alternatives to wellness. Kids are also in for an old-fashioned romp at the children's playground.

"These amenities were planned considering the profile of our target investors and homeowners. The view of the greens from the infinity pool to sun-everyday experience that makes living at an 8 Forbes Town unit all the more worthwhile," Hernandez added.

Showcase

The country's prominent residential architectural firm, Ilustre Gana, designed 8 Forbes Town Road. Megaworld is targeting turnover in December 2013.

Indeed, the two-bedroom model unit is also a showcase for the projected profile of its residents. Megaworld creative designer Ismid Gana described would-be dwellers, also artistic land in the design brief, as "organists." "In every sense of the word," she shared, we envision successful young professionals who know what they want and how to get it. He or she can be competitive in every aspect, and works hard and plays hard," Gana said.

The use of muted earth colors, reminiscent of condominiums in urbanized and upscale cities like New York and London, is another eclectic contemporary look.

As a result, the 99.2-square meter unit appears airy and spacious, with each bedroom featuring a dedicated bathroom, including a walk-in closet for the master's bedroom. There are also living, dining and kitchen areas, plus a maid's room.

Interior design

"The interior matches the impressive golf views," added Gana. As a result, no thick draperies were used to make the most of these sights. The furniture is also purposely set set against the windows. In the master bedroom, a reading chair is strategically placed near the window. "So the owners can sit down, relax by the view and simply relax."

Materials as decor items also derived from nature, to remain faithful to their inspiration from the outdoors. Leather headboards, wooden floors and linen tone were used.

"Simple profiles for the soft furnishing suit the architecture of the place," Gana said. "The design elements do not compete with the view of the golf course, but instead complement it by bringing nature's color into the room—from the color to the material that was used."

DREAMING how to make the perfect birdie or what shows looks-in-one will always be a joy in this master bedroom.

8 FORBES Town Road Golf View Residences

THE VIEW of the perfectly manicured fairways of Manila Golf embraces your stay and contemporary living room at 8 Forbes Town Road.

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CÍRCULO VERDE

The birth of a techno hub

HOW DO YOU DECONGEST A CITY OF 20 million people? Ayala Land has come up with a very dynamic answer: Build another one!

Which you would along Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City, it would be hard to miss the UP Ayala Techno Hub. The sprawling 37.3-hectare site, which is part of the property of the University of the Philippines, is destined to be a new landmark in the metropolis.

The total project cost is estimated at P6 billion, encompassing the construction of 10 low-rise office buildings, the UP Science & Technology office, and sites for residential buildings for university employees, faculty and students in hotel and various commercial spaces.

A hub for IT-related businesses

Ayala Land Inc., which is in the forefront of the project, will likewise ensure the establishment and maintenance of a central park and many open green areas. It promises to create a walker-friendly environment, where the feel of a neo-Ilocos campus will be replicated. This brings to mind the refinement and serenity of a western university town.

According to architect Edwin Salvat of the Integrated Design Group of ALI, the proponents aim to create a technology center that will serve as a hub for IT-related businesses operating in the country. He also stressed the fact that this was not conceptualized merely to entice business process outsourcing ventures (BPOs), but to foster the operations of mixed-land and international businesses and embassies alike.

The undertaking was planned and developed under the aegis of the University of the Philippines. It is a tangible and long-lasting tribute to mark the university's centennial.

The venture supports the creativity and excellence of the Filipinos, who they believe can successfully operate more than call centers. In a big sense, the hub is homework as a real-world laboratory for small-scale IT firms.

On one hand, it can draw from the research and consultancy strengths of the state university, as well employ the bright young minds of its new graduates. From another perspective, the academe can reinvent Bonifacio and analyze the needs of the IT market, so that it can gear its studies and syllabus to the actual needs and requirements of the industry. It also serves as a venue for technological fairs and exhibits.

UP-AYALALAND Techno Hub

The project will attract other businesses proponents to establish their offices here. It is a good alternative to the Makati Central Business District and the Ortigas Commercial Center, or even the Alabang Business District. If you come to think about it, Quezon City does not have its own central business district so this techno hub may very well serve as a catalyst for Quezon City's revenue.

Sans Rival office

It addresses the needs of Quezon City residents and those neighboring communities, like Bulacan and San Mateo, due to its proximity and accessibility. It may even serve as a satellite office for those businesses based in Makati with operations in the north side of town.

Having the business headquarters closer to the people surrounding and operating it will save a lot of time and energy, which translates to higher productivity and, for the employees, more quality family time since they can get to and from home earlier. This would also mean less traffic congestion on main highways, lower transportation costs, and many other Metro-dwellers-ills, are to mention the increase in jobs generated.

The area is very ripe for development. It is a blessing for the community. By that the UP-ALI partnership has spearheaded such a project to benefit so many people from all walks of life, from the big businessmen to the smallest lunch concept. The alliance between the idealism of academe and the acumen of big business can only mean a positive synergy.

The establishment of a techno hub is not just a prize project in the conventional sense, promising income for the university, business and the city. It is likewise a psychological milestone of an upbeat and forward-looking people, ready and able to take on the demands of the future.

For your comments and questions, please email to realestate@inquirer.com.ph

SM City Rosales now open to the public

BANGAMIAN SHOPPERS had their first look at SM City Rosales when the 52nd SM homegrill ownership opened its doors to the public.

Located on MacArthur Highway in Barangay Cantoan East, Rosales, Pangasinan, it is the first SM Supermall in this bustling province. SM City Rosales is bringing SM's shopping, leisure and entertainment excitement to Rosales and neighboring towns like Villasis, Bta. Mtala, Balungao, Urdaneta City, San Fernando and Dagupan. It is also serving shoppers in Nueva Ecija and Tarlac, as well as travelers from Baguio City and the Ilocos Region.

The mall has approximately 62,000 square meters of well-designed retail space. During the soft opening yesterday, the SM Hypermarket, a major anchor, as well as SM industrays like Shoemart and ACE Hardware opened.

A total of 27 tenants will also be open in time for the holidays. These include well-known brands like National Bookstore, Smashopper, Pan Mc, Ortigas, Island Videos, Blue Magic, Sportsfreaks, Metaform, Outfitters, as well as restaurants like KFC, Pedro Hur, Jollibee, Tokyo Tokyo, Greenwich and Red Ribbon.

SM City Rosales

Also to open are service shops like David's Pressure, Let's Have It, Freshtaste, and BBM, as well as fast food outlet chains like Tanner's Gadgets, Gaston Shortlink, and Thirsty.

When completed, SM City Rosales will have over 100 tenants. Scheduled to open in the mall is major anchor the SM Hypermarket from, as well as boutiques, specialty shops and restaurants. These will provide an exciting mix of fashion, electronics, home furnishings, health and personal care items, as well as entertainment centers, as well as prestigious national and international brands.

Completing the retailing experience are a food court and four dekata cinemas with a total seating capacity of 2,000. For visitors convenience, the mall has parking facilities for 700 vehicles. The parking area is contiguously located beside the main terminal for interprovincial buses and jeepneys.

The construction team of SM City Rosales includes Orlis Associates, mall designers; Jose Siao Liong and Associates, architects; New Golden City Builders, general contractors; and DE Abcede and Associates, project managers.

THE ROOM before the makeover

AFTER THE MAKEOVER. A spot was set where the little girl can curl up, read books, draw and nap.

Robinsons helps out in little girl's room redo

NATHANIEL AND ROANNE CASTILLO would love to give three 4-year-old daughters Marie Danielle or "Mielle" her own space. However, given limited budget and space, there seemed to be no room for this dream. Best Living, with the help of Robinsons Department Store, stepped in and gave Mielle her own kiddie kingdom.

The Castillo couple wanted to train Mielle to sleep alone. They also wanted to give her her own playroom-bedroom as a reward for an academic milestone in school. But the room needed a makeover. The beige wallpapers were peeling off, the walls were bleak, and some parts were stained with Mielle's own "artwork." The cabinet was dilapidated and falling apart.

Brain-stimulating

Tearing down the tattered wallpaper, Best Living's designer Ian Villanueva decided to paint the entire room with brilliant colors. "Sunny yellow and orange are said to be brain-stimulating and inner Mielle is very smart and inquisitive, she'll be at home with these hues," she said.

Earth-toned and striped cushions and mats from Robinsons now adorn the light yellow walls, blending with the dazzling orange drapes and a white carpet.

Ian wanted to create a spot for Mielle to curl up, read books, draw and nap. And since the little tot is a fiera The Explorer fan, the daybed was topped with pillows of her favorite Lilliea heroine, her bookbags, pillowcases and blankets from Robinsons' Home fashion completed the look.

Transformation

The design revolved around contemporary, functional and evolving pieces and patterns. Old items were transformed into positive classic with cleaner lines. Wastebasket and flexible furniture were also added. The old cabinet was dismantled to make way for a new one. A new wall clock, alarm clock, trendy vases, vine, picture frames, lampshade, yellow flowers and a basket from Robinsons added girly spice.

Aside from all these things, the new study desk in Mielle's favorite. Robinsons also gave Mielle a lunch tote, book shelves, set of pencils, markers, paper clips, note pads, memos, books, Dora sandals and bag. "Right now, she uses the table as her reading nook, but it can also double as a shelf or an entertainment center," Roanne said, and when she grows up, it allows on top will convert it into a vanity table.

What was once a mess-free has become Mielle's little sanctuary. She is even more responsible now and always cleans up her room. "The makeover was beyond the physical transformation," Roanne added. "It also gave us the chance to remind her for all her achievements and the joy that she has brought into our lives."

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By Bianca Consunji

EDWARD HAS TOO MUCH LIP-stick," one blogger complained in her review of "Twilight." That, and Carlisle's foundation makes him look like eggnog!"

But, she added, "I'll still watch it again because Edward is so hot."

"Hot" is an understatement. When Edward Cullen, played by Robert Pattinson, first appeared onscreen, the girls in the audience started shouting. They also hooted when Carlisle Cullen, played by Peter Facinelli, came onscreen. And again when Edward strode in

MORE

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Mall of Asia

By Ruby Del Rosario

FINALLY, DIE-HARD fans of "Twilight" were able to see Bella and Edward on the big screen, during the premiere of "Twilight" at the Mall of Asia Cinemagic last Thursday.

The red-carpet event was a success, as fans and celebrities alike lined up for the movie, for not before being treated to a performance by Kitsy & Erika. Pre-screening cocktails was held at the IMAX Lobby, where DJ Friday's and Imagination Zone provided refreshments. Guests were also asked to answer some trivia questions about the movie.

Celebrities spotted at the event included Chris Tiu, actress Iza Calzado and TV host Raymond Gutierrez.

The fans

Angel Baja, 14, and a freshman student at PMMF said, "I just want to see them in the movie." Angel had read all four books in the series over the summer, averaging one book a day. She just can't wait to see what happens next.

Ayra Avella, a 13-year-old from Cubao-Santiago, was eager to see how the movie would portray "Bella's Lullaby", which in the book was a song composed by Edward for Bella.

Ayra came with 11 of her friends, and they really enjoyed the movie. "Edward was hot," said one of her friends. "The scenes were great, everything we wanted to see (were there), although we would have liked to see more of the Edward and Bella kiss moments."

Ali Tupangco, 20, from Assumption College, started reading the "Twilight" books two years ago, after a random browsing in the bookstore. Ali very much approved of the movie cast.

Victoria Viola, 18, and Pablo Miranda, 17, students from the College of St. Benilde, were excited to see the scene where Bella finally knew the truth about Edward. Their favorite parts of the "Twilight" book were the parts where Edward was always there to rescue Bella.

They also wanted to see Seattle, who was described in the book as very beautiful. When asked what they thought about the movie, "all the good parts were in it," they happily said.

Kristal Ventosa, 17 and a BU freshman student, was just happy to attend the premiere showing of "Twilight." She had just finished the book in time for the movie, and was thrilled to see the novel acted out on the big screen.

The movie

The audience was a mix of generations, from tweeters to puppies and, of course, the parents who accompanied the young fans. When Edward first made his appearance, squeals of excitement could be heard all around. During the movie's most romantic parts, girls giggled and sighed.

Several scenes were a hit, such as the scene in the cafeteria where Edward first saves Bella, and the scene where Bella finally knew the truth about Edward. Their favorite parts of the "Twilight" book were the parts where Edward was always there to rescue Bella.

All in all, the movie satisfied what the readers were looking for: the movie's depiction of Forks, the vampire clans, Jacob, and of course the unbreakable chemistry between Edward and Bella.

Interviews by Pinky Abiera
Photos by Jason Rodriguez

RAYMOND GUTIERREZ
Have you read the book? What are you expecting from the movie?
I read the first book, but I haven't had time to read the others. Because there's so much hype surrounding the book and the movie, I was very excited to be invited to come to the premiere. That's why I said yes right away.

JM RODRIGUEZ
Have you read the book? What are you expecting from the movie?
No, I haven't, but I've heard a lot of feedback about it because my younger sister read the book. So I expect to be entertained.

HYSEE SALOMON
Have you read the book? What are you expecting from the movie?
Not yet. Just Harry Potter. (laughter) I read a lot of good feedback about the book, so I expect the same with the movie.

EMMA MORENO
Have you read the book? What can you say about the movie?
The movie was okay; I read the book, too. Normally, people don't like the outcomes of movies based on books but for this one, I think the two-hour film captured the important parts of the book.

THEA VENTURA, 21, Writer, Kabisteryanig
I've read the whole Twilight saga and I can't wait to see how my vision while reading it would compare with watching it in living color.

FLIP, 21, Teleperformance
Team Edward or Jacob? What can you say about the movie?
I'm Team Edward. He's the most gorgeous guy alive—so sad.

DANA, FILI
I read the book and I'm Team Edward!

TERESA SCOTT
Team Edward or Jacob? What can you say about the movie?
Team Edward! I was hooked on the book (Twilight). The movie didn't quite deliver as what I'd imagined, but it was worth the wait. I'm definitely looking forward to the sequel New Moon.

Bad makeup, great chemis

Wolfpacs, are draped confidently around Bella's shoulders.

(The surprising thing is that no one made a sound during the intense kissing scene in Bella's bedroom. Fans were probably holding their breath.)

The first "Twilight" movie is not for hardcore fans of the book series, nor is it for people who haven't read the series at all. There are too many departures from the book, and those who breathlessly wait to revisit the lines along with the actors will be disappointed.

That said, "Twilight" isn't bad at all. It's a little hard to follow if you don't know anything about the Stephenie Meyer saga, but it still delivers, give or take a few points.

Some viewers will point out such altered details of the book from the movie ("The Cullen house should be white! Charlie's kitchen is yellow! They didn't make Bella clumsy enough!"), but if you're willing to ignore a few extra details, the movie works because it doesn't fall into the trap that many films do, which is to painstakingly recreate everything in the book.

The first two "Harry Potter" films were awful because they were lovingly faithful to the book. Nothing was left to the imagination. Thankfully, at the risk of incurring the ire of some rabid fans, "Twilight" doesn't make the same mistake.

2bU tallies the positive and the negative points of the "Twilight" saga's first installment.

Pluses

Kristen Stewart and Hardwood's on-screen chemistry rekindles up where, over they some within a font of each other. The bedrooms scenes (don't worry folks, nothing happens—Edward is a 107 year-old virgin) is intense but sweet (and wow, Bella's pretty aggressive).

Twilight

How excited were people for "Twil
make them brave the rush hour t
it in time for premiere screenings
over the city. 2bU was there to ca
yes, to watch the movie too.

Megamall

Hangin' Outs Premiere

Interviews and photos by Nara Maiel

MICHAEL RYAN MALDIAN, 17
Student, UST
What was your favorite part?
"The fight scene of Edward and James in the ballet studio. Pure vampire action!"

GILLIAN MANGELEN, 20
Student, San Sebastian
Do you prefer the movie to the book?
"I've been receiving quotes my friends picked up from 'Twilight,' that got me really interested. But I'm the type who prefers to see the movie before reading the book, so here I am, excited for the premiere!"

Glorietta

ETC Premiere

Interviews and photos by Bianca Consunji

Karen Pamintuan, 21
TV host, ETC Chill Squad
What was your favorite scene in the movie?
"Edward's first look at Bella in the cafeteria!"

Ria Alegado, 13
Student, The Master's Academy
Who's your favorite vampire?
"Alice, because she's always very optimistic."

Isabel Dalisa, 19
Accounts executive-ad agency
What didn't you like about the movie?
"I actually liked everything."

Greenbelt

MTV's Twilight Premiere

Interviews by Rach Pacis
Photos by JD Lubos

DONNA BORROMEO, 23
Team Edward or Team Jacob?
Team Edward. Jacob is the best friend. He's the supporting actor. He's there to make Edward look even better. Not to say that I don't like Jacob, but Edward's just the perfect elusive guy that we know is out there and that we just can't find. There's an Edward in every guy.

GUSTO DE MESA, 21
Because it's a mix of romance and a bit of horror. It's exciting and romantic. It fits the mood of today.

MARI GUILER
The love story of Edward and Bella is so romantic. They love one another but so many forces are stopping them from being together, including Edward himself. I've finished the book already and seen the movie, so I know there's a happy ending—so far, that is. I haven't read the other Stephenie Meyer books, but I'm sure circumstances will try to separate them again. But I do hope they end up together.

SHANNON DUPLESSIS, 13
Have you read all the books?
Yes.
Why do you like "Twilight"?
It's a love story gone wild. It's twisted. It's everything you dream about.

PATRICIA ELGARLDE, 15
Why do you like "Twilight"?
Because it's awesome, it's really cool and I love vampires.
Team Jacob or Team Edward?
Team Edward

stry

From page C1

Their chemistry is the best thing about the movie, enough to compensate for the movie's many faults.

Viewers don't have to put up with Bella's monologues. Literary purists dislike the series because of its occasional over-the-top (read: sappy and badly written) descriptions of Edward. In the movie, all of that is thankfully edited out.

Billy Burke as Charlie Swan is hilarious—he'll remind you of your dad with his portrayal of the awkward, silent father of Bella.

Some of the cinematography is good. We say some because there are parts that look dated or don't do justice to the scene (i.e., the scene in the meadow). But for the most part, the de-saturated coloring conveyed the bleak, cold feeling required for the setting.

It's funny. There are many surprisingly hilarious scenes, like when Bella and Edward sit beside each other in Biology or when the Cullens burst in cash from a TV show.

It reminds you of your first love. Or what you wished your first love had turned out to be, anyway.

Minuses

Wordless acting—most obvious when Bella is scene out of the frame (or in this case, plausibly dismissed to leave Parks to a monotonous tone). Stewart does well in the scene where Jasmin (Rebecca Lee) catches her, but otherwise, she looks too stoked and not at all like the role she has to play.

Too much dialogue is omitted from the script. Sure, a lot of lines in the book are cheesy, but lines like "You smell good in the rain" and "Do I dazzle you?" are what made "Twilight" so popular with teens.

Bad hair and makeup. Seriously, we've seen better vampire makeup in Halloween parties. Haven't the makeup artists ever heard of blending?

The color of Edward's mask is different from his face, and his lipstick is too red. As cell-block has-been extraordinaire that took like vapes, and to his near-pneumatic?

Dated special effects. They really should've spent more on the movie, considering the huge fan base. And why were the fight scenes so short?

Inobtrusive product placement. We saw them all: Apple iPods, MacBooks, Nokia cell phones, Sony Ericsson Walkman, Volvo cars, etc. The movie felt like an overdrawn commercial at some points. (And who refers to their TV as a "flatscreen" all the time?)

A mediocre soundtrack. Occasionally a mood-spoiler except, maybe, for Iron and Wine's "Flightless Bird, American Mouth," in the prom scene.

The crashing sound you heard whenever Edward "sparkled." It looked as if 90s Fill-Upon films—sparkle with smooth fireworks. (Flashing, Instinct on the dash.

Robert Pattinson should've worked out to spare viewers the sight of his less than perfect, hairy torso. "I should've had a six-pack, but it didn't work out," he said. We agree.

E-mail the author at hintzenmark@yahoo.com

Yawn. Where have the real vampires gone?

Why everything about Twilight is undead wrong

By Jonathan Lansang

THE FIRST TIME I EVER HEARD OF "Twilight" was when I heard my niece squeal over the phone, "Tito my friend is reading Twilight!"

Curious, I asked what it was, and got me to start reply: "Tito my friend! It's this really-sad book about vampires! It's, like, so nice!"

My eyebrows shot up; I immediately knew what it was all about: a mushy emo take on vampires that girls would have their boyfriends to read, should they want to continue said role as boyfriends.

Pretty boy

At a glance, it's easy to see why the male lead followed has girls swooning. He's a pretty boy who's got that dark and mystery vibe all with just a hint of danger! His books are filled with long, cheesy details of his perfection—it doesn't get any gayer than having a "smooth marble forehead, a tangle of satin darkness bronze hair, liquid gold eyes with a thick fringe of black lashes.").

But he's also sensitive, thanks to his mind-reading ability (a trait I'm sure most girls wish their boyfriends had). He's the tragic hero who denies his desires just to keep his loved one, Stars. Where are the vampires again?

Okay, I'll give in and say that vampires actually have a connection to romance. They've always been described as a very passionate race, and, being immortal, they have a heightened appreciation of life (or death ... or undeath. Whatever, you know what I mean).

In that aspect, "vampire romance" doesn't sound like such a bad idea for a novel. But somewhere along the way "vampire" got a stake shoved into its heart and took a bath next to "romance."

Instead of Anne Rice's Louis or Bram Stoker's Dracula, both of whom had lived for centuries and had gained the "wisdom of ages," we're given whiny emo kid Edward who, despite being 107, acts shockingly (read: unusual) like today's typical whiny teen.

Why? Because Edward is a vampire who's been frozen at the age of 17 for the last 90 years. Instead of a vampire who's had the time to learn about the world, we're given a vampire who's had the time to learn about ... high school.

Edward's love interest, Bella, is also a problem. Instead of a strong female character, we're given a girl who's so boring that she's practically a vampire herself. Her only personality trait is that she's clumsy, and she's so dull that she's practically a vampire herself. Her only personality trait is that she's clumsy, and she's so dull that she's practically a vampire herself.

Bella's boring, Edward's boring, and the plot is boring. Why is this book so popular?

Because it's boring.

Bella is boring because she's a blank slate that girls can project themselves onto. Edward is boring because he's a boyfriend that girls can project their fantasies onto. The plot is boring because it's a story that girls can project their fantasies onto.

Twilight is boring because it's a book that girls can project their fantasies onto.

Twilight is boring because it's a book that girls can project their fantasies onto.

Twilight is boring because it's a book

A STUDENTS capture the spirit of the season

MARINELLE Dans as the Sugar Plum Fairy

CHILD'S artwork expresses authenticity

BODY senses at the park

UP MADRIGAL Singers in a light moment.

DANCE makes Kaiser Pellicanio and Victor Magpiol enthusiastic about learning and doing

RAFI head Marilou Velez nurtures an environment conducive for a wholesome fine arts experience

MODERN jumalon as Mari Chrysalmayr in the "Nutcracker"

UP ARTS Circle member supervises IS student in the collaborative painting session at Bonifacio High Street

Creative enjoyment at Bonifacio Global City

By Margo C. Enriquez
Photos by Helene Flamenco

DANCERS ROCKET ACROSS the stage, exuberant splashes of color on jester and corset line the walkway; songs from the Madrigal singers waft through the air. They are not against a cityscape, enhanced by snowengine Christmas dances interesting with the outdoor sculptures. Doesn't this atmosphere provide the kind of freedom and connection that makes you bond with your inner child and the inner child of others?

A BIG LEAP

Recognizing the importance of play, Bonifacio Global City (BGC) has been bustling with creative activities geared for the holidays. It's all part of BGC's plan to incorporate art into the community. The Bonifacio Art Foundation Inc. (BAFI) has been turning their vision into reality. It started with environmental sculptures dotting the landscape and eventually the world-class Science Museum by 2011.

"Seeing Brad's pieces go up and the people enjoying them have given the greatest satisfaction," says Marilou Velez, BAFI executive director.

In the performing arts, BAFI has also established a dance program. Former BP principal Edmond Mulgado has been training 36 students, ages 7 to 16, from Taguig City under his company, Dancers Inc.

Next year, the new Bonifacio Arts Center will be home to segments of theater, music and dance in partnership with Dulaang Philippinas, UP Madrigal Singers and Tanghalang Pilipino. The place will also serve as RP1 satellite studio for people who want to pursue their passions in the performing arts. BGC's calendar is full of free park shows.

BGC's gift to the public is the "Passion for Christmas," a series of cultural events. A fortnight ago, the public was treated to "Ballet Under the Skies," a delightful program which featured the dances of tomorrow. BAFI schoolers performed various divertissements in the food act. The finale of the show was an abridged version of "The Nutcracker," performed by BP dance school under the helm of Blondie Jumalon. The audience, mostly children with their parents, were awed by the sword fight of the mice, the flying Christmas tree and the international dances. In one act there dominated by gyms, the BP male soloists showed strong technique.

The soloists find the free park show an exhilarating experience. "I'm sharing my art," says Mamelle Dalcanton played the Sugar Plum Fairy. For the Magpiol says in Tagalog, "The theater has informal experience. In an open-air show, I feel more freedom and I have to work harder to project to the audience."

Says Jumalon, "We're popularized through free shows. You not only provide life art but also the company. Hopefully the youth would want to audition or the audience would want to watch more shows of BP. These programs can raise public awareness of that the government can help with the funding of the arts."

> BGC's cultural vitality makes it an ideal place to develop a balanced and fun lifestyle

To Jumalon, working with kids can be very challenging, especially in their adolescence. But it has its rewards. "It makes me feel younger."

The adults who brought their kids to watch the ballet must have shared his sentiment upon seeing the innocence and the enthusiasm of the young dancers.

Color their world

Last weekend, BAFI rounded up students from the International School and the UP Artists Circle for "Heart2Art and Collaborative Painting." BAFI invited middle school students, aged 11 to 14, of the elective called Artteganist.

Artteacher Carmel Lim was impressed by the turnout of the students, considering that the activity was outside the pupils' curriculum. Some of them came with their parents. For a few hours, they immersed themselves using the medium of acrylic and paper to interpret their idea of Christmas.

"Art goes beyond classrooms. BHS is a cool place. People walk around and look at the kids having fun making art. For the kids, the outdoors help them find inspiration," she says. "This activity also helps build confidence. They look at each other's works in a friendly environment and learn to express each other's expression of creativity."

The collaboration effort was done under the supervision of the UP Artists Circle. The members did the finishing touches before the artworks were framed and displayed. "This activity helps kids appreciate art and learn to express themselves at an early stage," says president Gino Bueza.

Today and tomorrow, the works of the children and the UP Artists Circle are on exhibit at Bonifacio High Street. A silent auction will be held. Teles says she was touched to see the kids donate their time. "It was a noble thing for them. They know the proceeds from the kids will be given to charity," says Velez.

Tomorrow at 8 p.m., the UP Madrigal Singers will sing like angels at the 9th Avenue at BHS.

To hardened adults, engaging in a passion or declaring pleasure from watching others pursue their passion contributes to their well-being.

Passion for Christmas will feature "Christmas Spirit," musical on Dec. 6 at 6:30 and 8 p.m., "Merry Troopers" on Dec. 13 and 14. Christmas Fusion concert will be held on Dec. 20. Other events include a yoga showcase exhibit which will be on display at Bridgeway Jan. 2009 and "Paper Jar Plaza" event hosted by the Philippine Animal Welfare Society on Dec. 14.

THE AUDIENCE, mostly children, enjoy the ballet under the stars.

LIFESTYLE

Int'l performing group opens Mall of Asia's Christmas festival

UP WITH People, a group of international performers, will formally open the SM Mall of Asia's Grand Festival of Lights on Nov. 29, 6 p.m., at the Sail Pilgrim by the Bay area. The group will have an earlier performance on the same day at 2 p.m. scheduled at Asia Arcade.

The program will showcase contemporary projects with international service partners and a global education on tourism. The current show is a multimedia, intercultural program that uses music and dance to educate the audience about their community's needs and inspire them to take action. The proceeds from the show will be given to a local charity.

Up with People is a nonprofit educational and cultural organization that provided young adults with an international and intercultural experience.

ENTERTAINMENT D3

THE SHOW is a multimedia, intercultural program that uses music and dance to educate the audience about their community's needs and inspire them to take action.

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On a clear starry night,

SM MALL OF ASIA
We Other Mall Comes Close
J.W. Diokno Boulevard, Mall of Asia Complex, Pasay City 1300 Philippines

Limit 50

GMA Official TV Network Partner

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SPOTTED! Standing (president) Hans T. Sy and Prima Ballerina Lisa Macuja-Elizalde share honors during the lighting ceremony of SM Mall of Asia's giant Christmas tree.

THE SM PIRKLL of Asia's 42-foot giant Christmas tree made of thousands of gold Christmas balls and stars.

A Christmas wonderworld at the Sm Mall of Asia

EVERYTHING IS GRAND AND GLORIOUS at the SM Mall of Asia as it heralds the holidays in a Christmas Wonderworld Celebration.

All the center of all the activities is the Giant Christmas Tree in the mall's atrium. The towering 42-foot tree is decorated with thousands of gold Christmas balls, stars, and golden garlands. The tree lighting ceremony signaled the start of Christmas at SM.

During the event, prima ballerina Lisa Macuja performed to Georg Frederick Handel's Alleluia and the classic Filipino carol "Pasko Na Naman" sung by the Los Piños Boys Choir. SM Prime Holdings President Hans T. Sy and Ms. Macuja led the tree lighting ceremony.

Music will fill the mall in the Grand Symphony of Voices, a series of performances by some of the country's top choral groups like the SM Singing Ambassadors and Core Tenacious. This will be held every weekend of November and daily in December in the mall's atrium.

Not to be missed is the Grand Christmas Choir Tree Performance at the Sea Miguel By the Bay. The country's first outdoor singing tree is 50 feet tall, covered with gigantic lights, special-ve shape, and will provide the stage for the country's top vocalist groups.

Grand Musical Plays staged by top theater groups like Trumpets and The

A CONTINUATION BY

DON'T MISS to watch the Underwater Christmas Adventure musical play, a story of 5 different creatures under the sea: sir Arnibito, the penguin, mermaid, stone fish, nosey shark and the mother shark, on Dec. 14 at 4 p.m. at the Music Hall of SM Mall of Asia.

WATCH! Invincapella at the Grand Symphony of Voices.

ORBIT's resident bird Cuckoo is here to deliver yummy snacks and treats from Obolo! With over 30 salty snacks, cereals, popcorn, cookies, powdered juices, and sauces, the Obolo brand of snack products will surely make your Christmas celebrations extra special.

TOY KINGDOM'S Christmas is for the kids. Its castle-like float relives wonderful childhood memories and awakens the imagination. Watch the living toys dance and come to the happy music.

THE PIRKLL OF ASIA that gives you a breathtaking view of Manila Bay as well as a preview of its upcoming Christmas Sea Adventure show. Beautiful sea mermaids and lovable sea creatures give an eyeful-of-life under the sea with bubbles and jolly fun.

SM Mall of Asia ho

CELEBRATE THE MOST WONDERFUL time of the year in the largest mall in the country, as The Grand Festival of Lights brightens your weekends at the SM Mall of Asia.

Witness enchanting afternoon characters in the most elaborate and exciting Christmas parade ever, which will take place every Saturday beginning Nov. 29 until Dec. 27, 2008.

Floats from Undeen, Kids' Republic, Kultura Filipino, Endo, Watsons, ACE Hardware, the SM Department Store, and of course, the SM Mall of Asia entourage around San Miguel by the Bay.

Capping the Grand Parade is the launch of the Firefly Christmas Tree, a 33-foot outdoor singing Christmas tree that assembles toy vehicles like the OP Ambassadors and the Core Tenacious to fill the air with Christmas carols.

Bring the whole family to the Grand Festival of Lights beginning Saturday, Nov. 29, and on Dec. 6, Dec. 13, Dec. 20 and Dec. 27 at San Miguel by the Bay.

KIDZ REPUBLIC, a favorite place for kids at the SM, also gang-raising you to a world where jungles of fun playground of every child's dream. Oversized candy colors blend with the playground's fantastic tubes,

CULTURE Filipino showcases our country's rich heritage with the Kalesa Kalesa. Juan de la Cruz parades in the horse-drawn carriage adorned with green grass and bright lights. The Kalesa Kalesa also displays Parol Pride, amazing Filipino lanterns in different shapes and sizes.

THE SM DEPARTMENT Store's floor is lit for a queen, it features a giant golden shoe that glistens with elegance, highlighting the excellent service SM Department Store provides its customers.

WATSONS showcases a magical exotic love that brings a graceful ballerina to life, radiating beauty like same way it does with its lineup of the best health, wellness and beauty solutions for all occasions.

osts Grand Festival of Lights

UNILEVER ORGANIC of a green Christmas with its environment friendly float. Aboard the glistening sleigh is Santa Claus with organic green hair filled with Vaseline Shampoo and gift packages from Bioxin. Proving only once again Santa is delivering his important Christmas message: "Save a Bag, Save the World."

ACE HARDWARE joins the festivities with super sized tools of the DIY trade—a giant hammer and screw driver. Christmas gifts that will surely bring a smile to your face adorn a whimsical gingerbread house.

a's Christmas Wonderworld!

ghout the Yuletide Season in a mall like no other.

- Walk your dog at the Entertainment Mall
- Dine under the stars with lots of food choices at The Veranda
- Listen to the Finally Singing Christmas Tree at San Miguel by the Bay
- Listen to the Grand Symphony of Voices daily except Sundays at the Main Mall Atrium
- Watch the Grand Musical performances every Sunday and Christmas Day
- Witness the Grand Festival of Lights every Saturday
- Watch the dinosaurs come alive daily 'til January 11

BIG LIFE-SIZED robotic dinosaurs will be at the Dino's Alive Theme Park from Nov. 28 until Jan. 11.

A Christmas wonderworld . . .

From page B4

also Doors Small will provide the heart warming family entertainment in the mall attractions every Sunday. The Nickelodeon Christmas Adventure on Dec. 14 is a story of five different creatures under the sea in Atlantica, which is threatened by the persistent secrets between the villains and the sea creatures. Christmas at Fairy Tale Villa is a story of well-loved characters Cinderella, Snow White, and Rapunzel, who are invited to the Prince's Christmas Party, which is threatened by the Step Mom's Club and the Witch's Federation. This will be shown on Dec. 21 at the Music Hall of the SM Mall of Asia at 6 p.m.

Kids will not only thank big this Christmas season in the Star Live Theme Park. Enjoy world class entertainment, Box movies, and Dino games in this exhibit of life-size robotic dinosaurs from Nov. 28 to Jan. 11 at the SM Mall of Asia.

The highlight of the festivities is the Grand Festival of Lights with its dazzling theme floats, dancers, and other performers. This will be held on all Saturdays of December except Dec. 27) and on Christmas Day.

Celebrate a Christmas Wonderworld at the SM Mall of Asia.

Int'l performing group opens . . .

From page B1

revive through the performing arts, allowing them to give messages of hope and goodwill through song and dance.

Up with People provides a six-month intercultural leadership program for young adults all around the world. Each cast of Up with People has about 100 participants who travel together to at least two continents and often to more than six countries with diverse cultural, political and economic conditions.

Up your Christmas spirit with Up with People on Nov. 28, 7 p.m. at the SM Mall of Asia Music Hall, and on 6 p.m. at the Grand Festival of Lights at San Miguel by the Bay.

26 LIFESTYLE

The Growling Tigers get a pat on the head

Alumni group Liga Tomasino hosts a dinner to help UST athletes

By Ruth L. Navarro
Photos by Ryan Lim

WATCHING THE UNIVERSITY of Santo Tomas Growling Tigers practice is enough to make you break sweat.

Four hours run up and long before students start swooning into the university, the players are already in their jerseys, doing warm-up laps in the gym.

The booming voice of coach Pido Jarencio fills the building as he shouts instructions at his boys. If they do as he says, they'd would be rewarded with new and harder drills to master. A player's mistake could mean punishment for everyone.

"This is nothing. You should see what these training is like—having supervised break," says team manager Gina Fernandez.

Jarencio makes it perfectly clear he plays no favorites; there are no stars in his team.

Besides he can't afford star-driven egos in a team whose mission in the off-season is to rebuild its depleted ranks. Six of the members of the 2008 champion team, including team mate Jerry Cain, will graduate from the team this year.

So the meaning the group perseveres through the grueling pace. When one looks as if he no longer has the strength to make an overhead pass or quick lay-up, his teammates cheer him on.

If they get punished for the mistake of one, they huddle and talk. As they part ways, one shouts the cry "Tigresan ito!"

Their training, thankfully, ends just when it seems as if their arms would soon fall off from all the passes and shots.

"You study hard, because I will take you out of the team if you fail," Jarencio tells them at practice's end. "Don't get into trouble, and be a role model to other students."

Support group

It is this same spirit that animates Liga Tomasino, the Thomasian alumni athletic support group. It is a non-profit organization that mainly aims to support UST's sports programs and its athletes.

"The players get inspired when they learn that alumni have not forgotten them. Even the coaching staff is motivated to remain loyal to players if they know they will get support no matter what," says Jarencio. "But a crucial center in our team, knowing all I can offer him is a scholarship."

Jarencio admits he ends up footing food and spending for miscellaneous needs of his players, but he thinks the school has supported the team as best as it could.

NO LOOKING BACK Players of team A and B train together under coach Pido Jarencio and team manager Gina Fernandez. Remaining players scramble to fill the positions left open by the exit of six players.

THE ROOKIE-LADEN team members shape up (l-r) Jervi Fortuna, Jaisun Wing, Dan Ramirez, Mike Vargas, Carlo Resequin, Chris Camus, Carmelo Alulang

"We have a rule here at UST that all athletes get the same benefits. If one player gets P1,000 of his course, all get the same. You can't ask for a favor and then fail," he says.

So, for added support in the off-season training, Liga Tomasino, with Magnolia Beside Tea, will host a benefit dinner for the team at the Filipinas Heritage Library Courtyard on Dec. 6, at 7 p.m.

Tickets are at P500 each, inclusive of ballot dinner and drinks. Call or text 0927-4321571 or text to 8696000.

Michaela del Callar, Liga president, says that the men's basketball team is just the first step.

"Thomasian athletes deserve all the support they can get. Through the years, they have excelled most admirably, resulting in numerous over-all championships in UAAP," she says.

For now, it's all about the boys who are sweating it out six months more before their next season starts.

Email the author at rnavarro@inquirer.com.ph

When students dance like no other

Pole dancing boys, provocative collegialas and odd gimmicks in the Streetdance Battle

By Bianca Caronan

AN INTERESTING MIX OF PROVOCative collegialas, pitoresque in orange inexpressible, girls wearing gas masks and pole dancing high school boys competed for the top prize at the Shockers Streetdance Battle Nov. 22 at Annex's Gymnasium.

Now on its fourth year, the competitive dance arena from over 60 high schools and colleges, in search of the best student dance group. Twelve high school and 13 college dance groups made it to the finals, each group doing high-energy performances on turbo and a crowd of about 1,000.

The groups tried to outdo each other, using gimmicks but were both impressive and quirky—Our Lady of Fatima University students wore orange prison uniforms (inspired by the Cory Aquino's release from house arrest a Pia Pilar sensation?), or the girls of Colegio de Santa Rosa donned gas masks goggles.

Provocative dance moves kept the audience glued to the five-hour show. While some were intentionally lacun (the pole-dancing boy from Xavier's Dance X stole the show), others looked out of place in a street dance competition. While la, Ateneo's Modern Dance Edge color guards were definitely an audience favorite with their risqué choreography, their moves seemed more appropriate for bar dancers than college students. They did cartwheels, splits on plastic chairs, and lots of grinding—fun to watch, but less on technical points. (Host Mo Twister joked, "All they have to do is jose mio-dance hun, and I'm happy.")

While there were no mishaps or bungalings, some performances were boring and repetitive. Oh, even if the teams were already among the best. However, there were some excellent dance members and acrobatic skills from mediocre performances.

While the college groups were generally non-polished, there moves to sync and smooth, the high school teams performed better physically because of higher energy levels—you could tell that they are in more fine and dedication into their routines. It paid off; they scored higher than the college groups. Plus, they also brought more supportive. (A gaggle high school boy scouts) were so my cheered for every off-girl team. Jus sinasi've had a lot of girlfriends.)

In the junior division, Miriam College High School's Superchilis Dance Troupe clinched the top spot, and the P100,000 prize. Its performances, based on one of the best the group has done in years, won both Immersion and powerful. Second place was bagged by the Holy Spirit Quezon City third was Colegio de Santa Rosa.

In the college division, De La Salle University bagged the trophy—a first in the competition's history—breaking the winning streak of the University of the Philippines Diliman. The UP Streetdance team not to join, which must have led the other college teams to give a collective sigh of relief. DLSU's Street La Salle Dance Company (SLDC) also won P100,000, followed by the Technological University of the Philippines in second place, and Ateneo's Company of Atenes Dancers (CADS) in third.

The Philippines' all-time and UP Streetdance personnel. The hosts also pitted various teams against each other in a freestyle dance-off, where Xavier won in the high school division, and UP in college.

Shockers gave the Shockers Street Style awards to Emilio Aguinaldo College's Glutanian Adonis and La Consolacion's Michelle Rosario.

Most excellent passing on streetdance teams as aggressive groups of show-offs who take on jokesters, so to speak. In this case, however, the teams were anything but mean. In the freestyle dance-off, between the De La Salle and Ateneo teams did the unexpected—they danced together. Not that we'd want to see the UAAP basketball players dance together, but they could probably learn a thing or two from the streetdancers.

Email the author at bmcaronan@yahoo.com

HIGHLIFE Sapucaia impressed the judges with their acrobatic moves.

ATENEO CADS snagged third place in the college division.

TIP #1 PWD the audience with acrobatic stunts.

super LIFESTYLE
Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan
Associate Editor Piero Pantoja

SUPER EXCLUSIVE!

Face to face with Dexter

This generation loves anti-heroes. And this serial killer might just be the most loved of them all

By Piero Pantoja

SOMETHING [illegible] about Michael C. Hall's [illegible].

I think, well, so pok. Get you'll find yourself wanting to watch it. Then you remember that the guy plays a calculating serial killer on TV (or you think twice).

In reality, Michael looks harmless. Sitting beside him in the VIP [illegible] room at the Ambiel Los Angeles, you don't believe he can whip out a scalpel anytime to add your blood to his collection of dexter. He looks like he's about to make a pitch for a romantic comedy. But he isn't.

Funny how this actor keeps playing characters who are surrounded by death. After playing David Fisher on "My Best Enemy" [illegible] charmed audiences around the world as Dexter Morgan, the misfit killer of serial [illegible].

Charmed is hardly a description for a "serial killer" but that's Dexter.

Dualso appeal

Everybody loves Dexter, examiner websites declare. The show's IMDB.com and TV.com ratings are [illegible] than that-rules?

Perhaps the good ratings—Dexter [illegible] is one hears on a generation of people who love the anti-hero. As we introduced on TV around the time teen girls are lusting after a cross-haired vampire, and when Joker is more loved than Batman.

Or maybe the character could [illegible]

HE
We Buy
DIAMONDS

SUPER EXCLUSIVE!

Face to face with Dexter

From page E1

has risque. There is something so interesting about a forensic blood spatter analyst for the Miami-Metro Police Department who likes to carry out his brand of justice on the guilty.

It doesn't hurt that the show isn't lacking in hype. Last September, Dexter's fate was the subject of over the top — in New York subways, in the streets of Los Angeles. There were even makeshift newsstands to cash in on selling all kinds of Dexter memorabilia. Even stars and CEs in red Converse and fake magazines.

All this was to push the show's third season. To promote the current second season, Showtime turned up the heat in the end.

Or perhaps the secret to the mystery itself. Erin Michael, who's played the character for three seasons now and is ready to do two more, wouldn't explain Dexter fully.

"For quite the non-intimate time with Dexter [but] my character's work is elusive. He's a tough one to consider sometimes."

What can you tell us about Dexter?

He's a very charming guy, a very capable guy and has these emotional blind spots. If somebody pushes the right buttons, he's so vulnerable to what is his manchinedelight appetite for connection.

Did you work closely with the guy who created the character, Jeff Lindsey?

Yes. Jeff wrote the books and the first season was based on the first book. He was around for the first season and I did speak with him about the character, but he really left us to interpret it.

This is a unique structure extremely because it was a book brought by someone independent who in turn took it to people who were space setups. One of those joint scripts was on board, but first guy went away and they brought somebody in to run the show. It's sort of a many-headed creative monster.

It's really remarkable that we maintain any sort of consistency. [laughs] But I think it's because everyone is there to serve the world of the show constantly, and the theme to specifically.

We've seen you transform into Dexter. Are you the kind of actor who wants to totally be in it?

I guess so, yeah. I like to be in it for a good five years. [laughs] I'm in the midst of my 10 decade now era they picked me up for the fourth and fifth seasons. We actually shoot on the same lot are shot "Six Feet Under" — Stanier Gower. I keep driving down the street to Stanier Gower. It's unbelievable.

SPOTLIGHT on the serial killer

Does the show take a toll on you?

Yeah, sure. It's his being perfect is honest, I might myself the other night. Having a conversation with a friend and I had also just seen the performance of "Dexter" on Broadway — was standing Eugene's work about doing like he's honest. I just realizing almost aspects of my own life and feeling frustration, and I stopped and said, "Would I be having these thoughts as potently if I weren't dedicated to simulating this person after doing to be without the capacity for us-friendship?"

I think there are ways it creeps in. It's an unconscious instinct. It pushes aspect of it, it's a real opportunity to front and maybe transcend some of those things you wouldn't otherwise, for work, it's nice to take a break.

I don't think anybody's pleased a serial killer for so long as you have.

I know, it's always been a puzzle, you're in and out. The season ends and there's not a sense of "you're done with that," it's more like, "okay I'm gonna put that back in the oven an simmer and just take it out and see how the flavor's changed when we go back to it." It's tricky.

COVER boy

FROM his Post-Under to serial killer

"I DIDN'T have a mission statement that I would only do things where I was surrounded in one way or another by dead bodies, but it worked out that way," says Michael

Do you ever get the chance to just shed it off?

Sometimes there's so much material we have through so quickly. I'm always pretty pissed with what's on the horizon, how to play it, how it might need to be modified, so you never completely switch it off.

What kind of fan do you have in your life?

Umm, interesting my kitchen. [laughs] It's fun.

What else do you do for fun?

I'm certainly spending some time looking into what I might be able to fit into the future, maybe take on another character with a discernible beginning, middle and end that I can put away when I'm done.

I'm hoping to do some travel. There are many personal opportunities, perhaps go on a jaunt now and just have an open-ended ticket and do some traveling on my own after that. I hope to do that in early spring.

But I do actually have a new house. I moved in right before we started shooting so there's a lot of attention that it's craving.

How important is theater to you?

I've been focused on the roles on them two TV shows over the past couple of years and sometimes when features come, it's difficult to fit in a play. But I can imagine that I will find myself back onstage in the not-too-distant future. I don't have any specific commitment.

Have you stayed in touch with your "Six Feet Under" cast mates?

Well I saw Rachel [Griffiths] at the Emmys and some of the surrounding parties. I've been in touch with Peter [Krause] periodically over the past couple of weeks, and he actually threw his show (Dirty Sexy Money) out too far from us. I was on the phone with Lauren Ambrose. She's back in New York so I don't see her much. The three of them I've seen a lot in the past months.

You seem to keep ending up **with dark roles on TV. Would you want to do something completely different? Like Snoop Girl? (laughs)**

(laughs) Yeah, I keep trying. I keep knocking on their door but they've just not interested. I didn't have a mission statement that I would only do things where I was surrounded in one way or another by dead bodies, but it worked out that way. I find that Dexter has to lighter elements. But undoubtedly, even in the lighter moments, there's a pretty dark undertone to it. I'm not sure I'll begin to take the lighter fare and I'm confident you will happen.

In the first season, people decided that Dexter was a good guy. But in the second and third seasons, he kind of got darker. Do you think the season will change their opinion?

I think the first season went a long way to enlist the audience's sympathy and identification with him. Once that was achieved, I certainly think it's interesting to push the envelope considerably and to see Dexter — while he's moving toward more human behavior in the third season — also moving in to murkier and darker territory in terms of his relationship to his compulsions and the way he kills.

It's very interesting to do — it's not like a shift season that he moves more to the light and the darkness follows, it's more like he moves to the light and the darkness goes this way so the spectrum becomes broader.

THE CAST of Dexter

I'm seriously all for challenging the audience's affection now that it's been earned. I don't think Dexter should go out and indiscriminately kill innocent old ladies, but to see him play foster and hunt with the tenants of the state, I think it's compelling for the audience.

How do you feel about Jimmy Smits now being part of your show?

It's such a shot to the series for us to attract someone of his calibre. It's really gratifying. And he is a talented and a genuinely great on-set guy.

What will happen to Dexter's relationships?

What's interesting about the whole show hinges on — it seems now is that for Dexter, something big how he was brought up and encouraged to think of himself, all of those things are an act of rebellion. For him to think about becoming a father and being a husband — they're things that for his third life were never possibilities for him and were forbidden, that they would result in disaster.

They're very conventional choices that for him are an act of defiance. I think those things will come to fruition. I don't want to give too much away.

What's your reaction to people who say that the show encourages people to empathize with serial killers?

I would say that the show encourages people to empathize with Dexter. I don't know that I would take it beyond that. I don't think it means that you should examine your relationship with Jeffrey Dahmer, you know. [Laughs]

Can't get enough Dexter?

More ways to enjoy him aside from DVD marathons

- Play the game. Or at least wait for it. At the San Diego Comic-Con, it was announced that a Dexter video game would be released for the iPhone and iPhone Touch via iTunes, and that the games would have different episodes.
- Listen to the songs. Dexter Music from the Showtime Original Series was released in 2007. You can also get it from iTunes, and the iTunes version includes five bonus tracks.
- Buy Dexter merchandise on the Showtime website (www.sho.com/site/dexter/). It even has a blood-splattered pillow made by an academic. Seriously.
- Visit Dexter's MySpace page (http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=132869360) or do a Google search; she is strangely open in his profile, saying, "I hunt down and brutally murder those vicious criminals who have managed to avoid the clutches of the law. I would, however, never harm an innocent soul."
- We get a kick out of his list of favorite TV shows: "My show, Dexter. I also really enjoy the Tom Cruise Scientology movie." Lame-ass excuse, if you want. His fans do, including me who wrote this note: "Dexter, I hope you have a good b-day. If you want to have some fatchy fun, let me know."
- Log on to Dexter's Fan Picks (http://dexterwiki.sho.com/Fan+picks) where you can read Dexter quotes, spoilers and news, take a fun quiz, check out Dexter's "killer style," add what you know to the Dexterpedia Dexter section, check out Dexter fan art or send in your own, and even contribute a Dexter haiku. Yes, a haiku.

Hip new sharing site

Gary V on Ovi offers unlimited access to the entertainer's concerts and other activities

By Zee Cadiz

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A WORLD LEADer in mobile communications jumps into the media sharing community bandwagon? The result is Ovi.Com, which is every social network/media sharing site combined and more.

Ovi, which means door in Finnish, represents Nokia's stance in continuing the Internet and mobility. It's not the usual social networking site. Aside from the pornographic photos, ridiculous albums by idiots, Ovi offers unlimited storage space for all of your media including Word, Powerpoint, Excel, and even music files.

The maximum upload capacity per attachment is whopping 350MB! Plus, you can easily back up your contacts, calendar, task and notes online. So if ever you lose your cellphone (Ovi for 6th level), bye, no Ovi will keep your important files safe and up to date.

Through files on Ovi, you can use your mobile phone (such as the N96) to view, download, and send photos, documents, and files stored on your personal computer. Files is currently on a 60-day trial period. If ever you need to access files in your home computer (gulok; you can easily send request/s do so with Ovi.

Nokia chose no other than Mr. Energy himself to be the face of Ovi. Gary Valenciano, who is celebrating his 20th year in the music industry put up his page on Ovi as a way of keeping his friends updated.

"I decided to upload my photos and videos because I wanted to share them with my fans and everyone else. It's a way for it to all my way of showing and telling people that I would not be where I am not without them," Gary V said.

Check out http://share.ovi.com/GaryV and you'll see personal and behind-the-scenes photos and videos a new and refreshing peek into Gary's busy schedule.

With the many features and applications that Ovi has to offer, the Ovi site is a easy for people to catch up with the goings-on in Gary's life, and it is also a way for the singer himself to stay connected with them.

Ovi currently includes through your phone about any changes in your site," said Valenciano, who easily got the hang of navigating the Ovi page and is also fascinated with the Google-esque feature. Upload a picture and it runs a staging a map where the photo was taken. In a way, it's like playing "Where in the World is Gary V?"

With Ovi's themed options, fans can turn the uploaded photos and videos of their idol, and Gary can choose which files to display on his site. Gary is excited about what this media sharing can lead to. "I think there's no telling how creative our fans become! Tomorrow said he is open to the possibility of uploading music files that people can download and add their own sound to.

Ovi.com is open even to non-Nokia users. This is the perfect site to keep your life in sync, and help you stay connected with friends regardless anywhere.

For more info and to sign up for an account, log on to www.ovi.com

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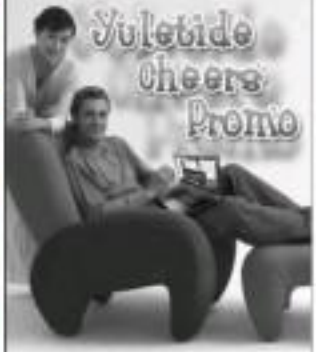

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Outrage against the Matsing

MADRID, SPAIN—SO there I was, waiting for the next train, when a curious ad flashed on a huge plasma screen in the middle of the railway.

It began with a dotted red line streaking across a sepia-toned atlas, tracing the journey of a bubbly-as from Espana to Filipinas. Once upcoming merienda, with a mountain of pandesiong begging his back, bahlihayan blending rosbi and rice fields and languid carabaos. He came home to his seniors town in the Mountain Province in the Philippines, and was greeted by an excited throng.

The homegrop then gathered in a spacious inn, and an elderly man asked the burning question, "O, kumusta naman ang Madrid nila?"

"Ang Cibeles," blanking replied, "Okey lang."

(Subtitles scribbled below the screen in Spanish: "La Cibeles real hiere.")

"Hindi dyd Pinoy?" blanking said in rage translation, "Ikaw lang... mamatay!"

"Pero ang pinakagusto," said Sandong with dramatic flourish, "ay ang Metro."

"METRO?!" the villagers asked in unison, in the exact tone as Scooby Doo says, "Shaggy?!"

Sandong then magically conjured a map of Madrid's renowned underground railway, and laid it on the bamboo table. The crowd let out collective oooh... actually, it was more like "Owwww..."

The homegrop was so impressed by the concept that an elder suggested they build their own Metro. Using rudimentary pulleys, cement blocks, and of course, the trusty carabao, they hauled ass and built an exact replica of a section of the modern Madrid Metro, connecting two sides of their little town. Dubbed by vice paddies and lush mountains.

The last scene showed the enchanted crowd riding the underground railway. They stepped her or swam ing gent.

The closing spiel, translated from Spanish, proclaimed, "The fibers that all cities would like to have."

We wear victimhood like a perpetual chip on our shoulder

Diatribal groups

I burst out laughing to the blast crowd in the station at that moment.

But something tugged at my conscience. I had bet my brown skin that not many other Pinoys would have found it that funny. Sure enough, when I checked out the ad on YouTube, I opened the same old can of worms, the comments were the usual diatribe posted by angry Pinoys from all over the globe:

"Offensive!" said one poster. "Why bring back those defunct issues in this commercial that has nothing to do with the fact that many Filipinos are proud of their Spanish heritage?"

"Insulting!" said another.

This one is my favorite. Pure rite discussion. "The F**ing slavery and bandalismo! It's rather insulting, really."

Another said that it depicts Pinoys as perennial copycats of our "colonial masters," and that it plays on stereotypes that we are backward, naive and chaotic, that it doesn't help promote the ties between the two countries, puki-yuda, yada.

If I may turn coo in The Joker: "Why so serious???"

Twitchy sensitivity

This is the same serious skinned, twitchy sensitivity about our national image that sparked the headache in 1998 about a chocolate-covered cookie named "Filipinos."

Our government filed a diplomatic protest against the government of Spain, the manufacturer Mahisco Bocta and the European Commission, because the biscuit's name, it said, was an offense to us as a race. The reasons who authored the protest claimed that the candy's name was offensive because it insinuated that we Filipinos are "dark on the outside and white on the inside."

Ex-Philippine President Joseph Estrada called the brand "too much." [He was, after all, an expert on all things insulting.]

Honestly, I had mixed those Filipinos and thought they were really good. I wonder if Mongols had the same reaction after the pencils were named after them. Or if the Finnish became all fired up when they became a prefix for oily potato sticks.

More recently, there was the "Desperate Housewives" issue, when an enraged multitude of Pinoys the world over demanded an apology from NBC and screen Terri Hatcher for a line in her script—"Now I would just like to make sure they are not from some used school in the Philippines."

On cue, like Pavlov's dog salivating after a bell strike, the usual angry tipsters.

Victim hood

We truly wear this victimhood like a perpetual chip on our shoulder. Do we equate sensitivity with patriotism? If that were so, then colonial mentality has simply mutated into distorted nationalism.

How have we become so oversensitive to such things, and yet be so tolerant, "a resilient people" even [I bloody hate that description, by the way], of many other things I deem even more humiliating and dehumanizing?

We are so jaded by others' opinions of us and yet we are hardly critical of ourselves.

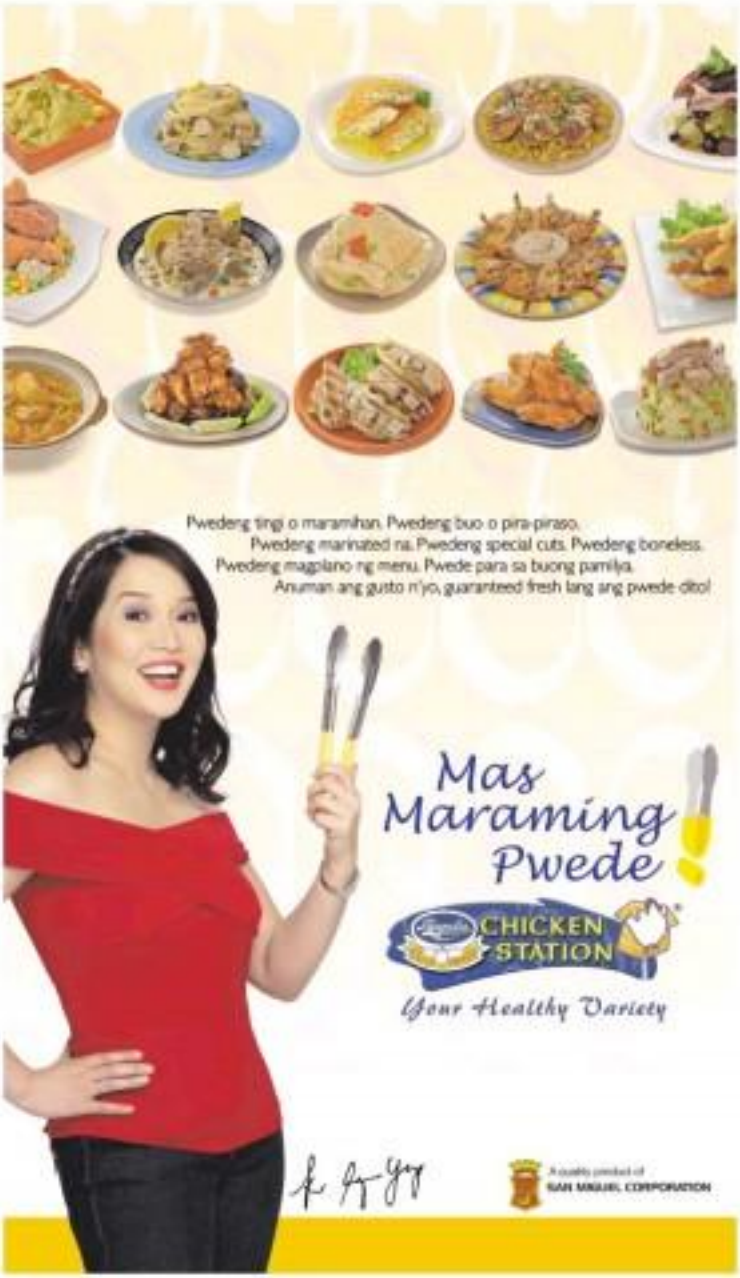
Come to think of it, what is an insult?

I find it more insulting to see people pissing shamelessly on our streets. I get even more pissed knowing the monkeys that run our government are crapping on our democracy. (Apologies if that is an insult to monkeys everywhere). I am outraged that our treasured, most famous island is slowly sinking from the sheer weight of human waste and cut-and-paste development.

I am deeply upset that our seas are being polluted and fences plundered by the Corporation in the name of the bottom line. I am angry that I've been paying my income taxes for over a decade, but still wonder to this day if I had just funded the new SUVs in a congressman's convoy.

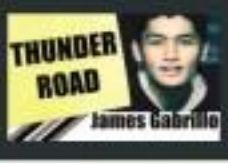
I am offended by the fact that many of us hardly take offense at any of these.

Whew. All this bitter talk has left me hankering for something sweet. I think I'll pass by a store and grab a pack of Filipinos. They're really good, but sometimes, they can be a mouthful.



super LIFESTYLE

Beats that burn bright



THUNDER ROAD

James Gabrillo

It's all about the music for London-based band Fireballdown. With sensibilities as clear as their vision, they're deadly serious with their longing to be heard

INSPIRATIONAL, SERIOUS-sophisticated, and adventurous. This is Fireballdown.

Followed by a slew of artists soaring from different musical genres, the London-based band places emphasis to be influenced by a passion to reach people through music.

Jon Matlock leads the band vocally and plays the guitar. He says in Grounded we keep trying the band going, and has taken the lead with the songwriting. Joel Adelgem is the bassist and does backing vocals. Andrew Hodgson is the drummer and also does backing vocals. He calls himself an "un-sacrificed," and this sometimes shows through in his drum grooves.

The band's music is a fusion of punk, funk, and rock'n'roll, with a hint of some Bollywood beats. Its song sounds the same.

"Our plan is that you listen," the guys post in their MySpace. "Our live is made complete once a lyric, chord, or beat causes you to smile."

Well as about your brand of sound.

JON MATLOCK: Through the band is in many ways the culmination of our individual dreams. It's a journey to us and myself. We started to reach lives more than anything else. And, combining our talents, skills, and personalities, music seems the most effective way to do this. So regards the bassist of music. I think it's an avant-garde fusion of the new and the old: pulsing, frothing rock interspersed with smooth, soulful vibes and a touch of tribal chorus.

How did you all get together?

ANDREW HODGSON: Joel, who's from the Philippines, and I, from South Africa, met in a church in London where we ended up playing together for a few years in the same church band.

Sometime during 2005, we decided to jam together, using my kitchen as a makeshift studio. In 2006 we met Jon, another Pinoy who ended up in the same church in London. By '08, realized

BEATS P2

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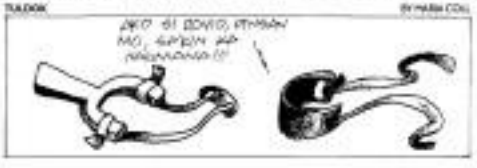
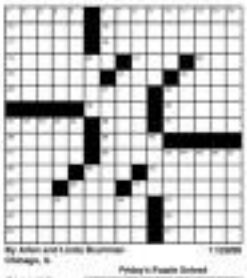


KIKO MACHINE

BEH

DAILY CROSSWORD

By Anton and Linda Mcuirmon
Chicago, IL



Friday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

CONCEPTS SU DOKU

Concepts Sudoku

By Dave Green

6		2			7	3
		4		5		
7						8
	3		9		7	5
				2		
	7		5		8	2
1						4
			7		9	
9		5			6	1

Difficulty Level ★★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Type and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

4	3	9	1	5	6	8	2	7
7	6	1	2	8	3	4	5	9
8	5	2	4	9	7	6	3	1
3	1	4	6	2	5	9	7	8
9	2	8	3	7	1	5	4	6
5	7	6	9	4	8	3	1	2
1	4	3	5	6	2	7	9	5
6	9	7	8	3	4	1	6	3
2	8	5	7	1	9	2	8	4

Beats that burn bright

From page F1

that, personally and musically, we sang from the same hymn sheet. And the flames started burning from there.

At that point, what were the struggles you faced?

JB: Mostly problems with schedules. Andrew and Joel had very hectic full-time jobs and families, and I was pretty busy with music school. Then a mutual's course in music business after that. It was also a bit tough deciding on certain things musically and creatively—mainly because the other two had yet to realize that I'm always right, (laughs)

AB: As with 99 percent of bands out there, our beginnings are humble, and being unknown means very small audiences in equally small venues. The band has made a conscious effort to give each performance our all, making sure that even if there are only a handful of people, the songs are passionately delivered, making the most of each opportunity that we have.

Being unknown also means that practicing and gigs have to be done after hours, while day jobs are needed to pay the bills. It's always going to be tough to plan into the early hours of the morning, and then be up and ready for work a few hours later.

What was your most memorable gig like?

JB: The Philippine tour is definitely up there somewhere. It was great getting the other two to meet all my old friends and bandmates, and getting them exposed to the scene I grew up in. I know they were both deeply moved by the experience.

AB: This was our debut Manila show, period. This included a live TV performance and also the filming of our first music video.

Being placed in the regional semi-finals of the 2008 surfers' unsigned competition (SUC) was another high point, giving us the opportunity to play to more people, including the fans of the other bands in the competition.

What's the one thing not a lot of people know about you three?

JB: We all use mobile phones.

AB: The fact that we met in a church would be a fairly strange concept for some people. It's probably not too common place for rock musicians to find each other in a church and decide to be in a band together. So it started with God really. He breathed the first life to first. The music then followed.

Dreams for the band?

JB: That we might be remembered as a band that actually made a difference in society. I hope that people will remember us for positively impacting their lives in some way...for saying something that in some way brought them closer to living out their dreams, closer to living out their lives to the fullest.

AB: Whether live or recorded, we want to have our music heard by as many people as possible. We believe music is more than a tune or a song. It is also a way to speak out and express opinions. It is a powerful art form that has the ability to influence, create a mood, or deliver a message. If we can convince loads of people, from our tunes in their heads, to have them singing along with us, then we'd be very happy!

Who do you dream of sharing the stage with?

JB: Would love to open for MUTE or Moonstarr. It's crazy ego it would have been HOPE, but I hated it cos friends who handled their tour in Manila that they weren't the nicest of guys. So sad.

AB: That must be one of the hardest questions to answer because there are so many great bands. Choosing one or two in particular would mean like we have ranked them. It isn't our responsibility, how getting the draw of us to agree on any one band would be. We are honored to share the stage with any band that is passionate about the music they're making, and that works hard to perfect or fine-tune their sound.

Tell us what's next for the band.

JB: Our focus is gonna be on touring. We plan on playing as much as we possibly can around the whole of the PH now the next year. There are plans to visit the Philippines again in 2010. Your ear will know the date to write, practice, and tour our butts off. We're nowhere near our peak in terms of the explosiveness and tightness of the shows we put on, but I doubt it will take very long for us to get there. Watch this space.

Everything that you're doing...the music, the performing—what do they all mean to you?

JB: Right now, pretty much everything. It's what I believe I was created to do and the most effective way I feel I can touch people's lives. To quote Eric Liddell, "When I play, I feel God's pleasure."

AE: Music is in our blood. I don't think any of us would think of a more constructive way to spend our lives, but to create and perform music. Knowing that people are entertained by what you have created is a very fulfilling feeling. I hope we can continue with Parokya for many years to come!

Any last words?

JB: Yeah, people need to know that the music coming from the fourth East Asia is mind-numbingly amazing. The best artists from over here will give the best of the best from the UK a run for their money. I'm so looking forward to being a part of the groundswell that gets the sound of the fourth East heard across the globe.

24/7 SUPER *RADAR*

By Janina Cuenca-Bayle and Tad Jose

Live life to the fullest! Don't be afraid to laugh out loud. Answer the embassy's questions. Be like a baby at the theater. Wish the virus of the holidays and traffic—not to mention the world wide economic crisis—it's nice to have some escape once in a while.

KAYSH IT WHILE IT'S STILL HOT! This weekend, ongoing until tomorrow, is the indefatigably funny variety show by the UP SAMAHAYOM. Live Kids Show+ The UP Centennial Edition at the UP Theater in the University of the Philippines Diliman Campus. Show time is at 7 p.m. Tickets are available at the gate, or at all SM Ticketnet outlets or call 911-5555.

GET LOST ON THE DANCE FLOOR tonight at the A-Venue [Makati Ave., Makati City] when Trance Alliance, featuring John "DB" Fleming and Digital Blonde, whip up sounds to get you moving. But own Marcelet Dario of NBK will deservedly play alongside the two superstars. For VIP reservations call 887-3473, 887-8539, or log on to www.driven-manila.com.

IT'S RAINING FIRE FROM THE SKY right now, but you'd welcome a night rolling down the aisles laughing, catch Pen Navarrete with all brand new material. Tonight, at Mall of Asia's Presidente Cinema, the Restaurant of Comedy is open for business, all for the benefit of Super Foundation. Tickets are sold at the door, or call 851-0000.

On Tuesday, Dec. 7, **SPEAK A MANY-MEANING NIGHT** with Repertory Philippines' Isanjarlan Tuesdays With Morrie at Onstage Greenbelt 1. Starring Bart Guingona and Miguel Faustmann, the show starts at 8 p.m. For tickets or inquiries call 867-0016 or 891-3999.

A healthy Options Christmas

If you're tired of the same old Christmas gift baskets, then surprise your friends, colleagues, clients and loved ones with the Christmas Gifts selections from **Healthy Options**. The **Healthy Options** Christmas gift bags and boxes offer excellent corporate Christmas gifts and unique healthy gourmet food selections featuring organic snacks, cookies, wine and other delectable Christmas treats!

Shangri-La Plaza EDSA • SM Megamall • Trinoma • SM City North EDSA • Rockwell Mall • Ayala Malls Greenbelt Makati • SM Mall of Asia • SM City Manila • Northbay Mall Gateway • National Supermarket Alabang • SM City Sta Rosa • SM City Clark SM City Pampanga • Ayala Center Cebu • SM City Davao • SM City Cebu North Wing

super

The Angelina Jolie of cell phones

But the mind of Albert Einstein—that's the Sony Ericsson Xperia X1

By Adel Eaton
Gadget Source

FIRST ANNOUNCED IN FEBRUARY, SONY ERICSSON's new Xperia X1 has been generating considerable buzz on the Net and around geek tables at the coffee shops, and speculation and anticipation have reached near fever pitch levels that even Apple acolytes have been discussing the Sony Ericsson phone.

Well, it's finally here. Officially released in the Philippines just a couple of days ago, we're happy to report we got our hands on an X1 a month ago and have been able to put it through its paces to see if the hype was warranted.

The Reader's Digest Condensed Answer: Yes.

Smarts

Simply put, it's a handheld living thing, and it's got the pedigree and the smarts to go with it. Raise behind is the cell phone world.

Think Angelina Jolie with the brain of Albert Einstein, but Angelina is a cell phone, and her name is easily Xperia X1.

The adjective "little" is misleading. For what it really is, and for what it can do, you'd expect it to be a heavy, big-ass gadget, like maybe a small laptop. The surprising thing is that it is actually smaller and lighter than some less inspired phones.

You'll never guess the X1 was stuffed with so much hardware and software goodies. The only clue might be that it was slightly thicker than most new phones. (That's because it's hiding a snug tucked, slide-out QWERTY keyboard in there; we'll get to that in a bit.)

You get the X1 (which comes in silver or black), the USB charger and cable (a departure from norm for Sony Ericsson), the X1 resources to the physical world through a Mini-USB port), a green-something hands-free headset (that uses a conventional 3.5mm baby-screen jack), a high-capacity 2GB microSD card, a software CD and documentation.

Inside the phone you get a 3.2 megapixel camera, a long-lived 1500mAH battery and all the software you'd want—including Opera, Microsoft Office Mobile Suite and Microsoft Direct Push Technology.

That's because the Xperia X1 uses Windows Mobile 6.1 as the operating system, the first Sony Ericsson phone to do so.

Irresistible

It's easy to get lost in the X1's rich feature set and forget its raison d'être: it's a phone—a damn is profusion exceedingly well. Calls are clear, audible. The battery life is good, even with high-performance features turned on; you can get a couple of days without charging.

But the stuff under the hood is irresistible. It's mainly an enhancement of either. The X1 does nearly everything: it's a camera, an Internet device, a multimedia player, a PDA.

We don't really need to run down the list of connectivity options; if it exists, it's probably in there. Notably, the X1 is 3.5G capable, and can (I can do Internet) works with uploads, and is ready to run even as-yet-to-be-released software (upload-download promised that would be great if we had it here).

The dominant feature of the X1 is the big, bold, bright screen (but takes up almost the whole front of the X1. If you're a space-saving, sleek-and-slim kind of person (yes, that's a weird noise) the fronteur be could read the fine print. And wait till you watch a movie on this thing!

And did we say it's also a full-functioning touchscreen?

Ergonomic

You can enter data in a number of ways: using an increasingly quaint stylus (like the old Palm), through the D-Pad or 4-way key (like your PSP), through an upward joystick (think tiny trackpad), with your finger on the touchscreen (think iPhone), or through the X1's excellently designed invisible QWERTY keyboard.

Most of us liked the Nokia Communicators because of the keyboard) that made it work a lot like a laptop when you cracked them open. The X1's a mini-keyboard situated on the right (the big, gorgeous screen reverses itself accordingly), and typing is fast, convenient and effortless.

The keys are round, satisfyingly tactile and backlit, and they are set well spaced so that your fingers don't get in each other's way when you text.

But the nicest thing about it is that are sliding part. Simply put, the keyboard slides out in an arc; it's curved and ergonomically designed so that it's easier to use, and angles the screen so that it faces you squarely as you type. Cool.

One of the great innovations of the X1 is the ability to pair on different faces, to change the whole look of the phone depending on your personality or your mood that day.

The X1 can keep you up nights with its insanely extensive customization options, but the Customizable Panel Interface is the most fun.

You can choose from 7 built-in panels ranging from the usual Microsoft Today screen or two Xperia versions, or you can use simple ones that make the X1 look like a radio player, an Internet device, or one that just shows the time and some fish swimming lazily around the screen.

These fish are so amusing to discover as well, changing color depending on the tribe. They even follow your finger around the touchscreen.

If you get tired of these, you can download a lot more panels from the Xperia website.

Baggage

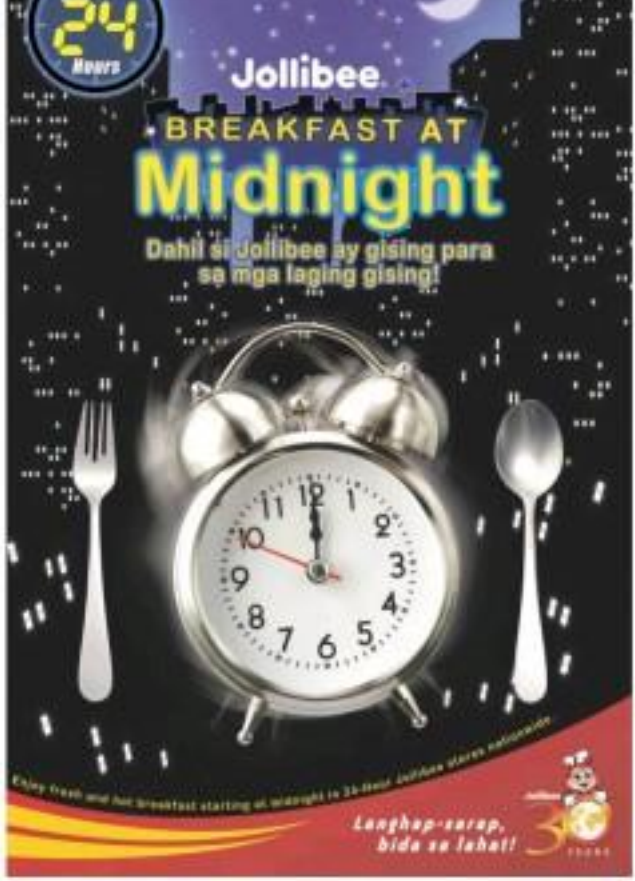
There are a few niggles, though. Working on the Windows Mobile platform, we get all the baggage that comes with it: some big, occasional freezes and hangs. But nothing we're uncomfortable.

Another is the controversial cost. In the US, users bewail the sag price, which is high ($800) because the phone is open and unsubsidized by telcos.

But the X1 is a high-end luxury device, a status symbol; the difference is you get what you pay for, which in this case is a lot.

A big complaint about the X1 is that it's not an iPhone. We don't know about that; it's comparing Apples to oranges, really. The Xperia X1, feature for feature, seriously does a heck of a lot more than an iPhone, and for other people, that's enough.

In fact, that's the big complaint about the iPhone is that it's not an X1. Right back at you!



Say hello to a new phone company

FROM CUBE, THE SMART subsidiary of one of the biggest telcos in the country, comes Red Mobile, a phone service aimed at the young, upscale market.

The arrival of Red Mobile comes in a timely respite for mobile subscribers drawn to the promise of unlimited calls—a proposition that unfortunately comes at the expense of rebuilding network coverage and call clarity.

Consider also the case in which unlimited calling is being offered today. At P22 per day, consumers subscribing to unlimited call service can spend up to P750 a month—not as good a deal as it sounds, given that majority of the Filipino market cannot afford to shell out P25 daily for maximum the amount spent.

Red Mobile offers a practical alternative. At just 50 centavos per call to subscribers within the network, consumers can enjoy the lowest per-minute rate in the country.

Also, Red Mobile allows users to place phone calls down to their very last P0.50 load and make the most out of what they spend on prepaid credits.

Coming into a very saturated market, Red Mobile also understands that consumers deserve better service when it comes to voice calls. The company offers clearer voice connection and countrywide 3G coverage.

The first of the Red Mobile value-brand aims to give mobile users a powerful voice by making sure that they get the most reliable service and the strongest coverage on top the lowest per-minute rates rates in the market today.

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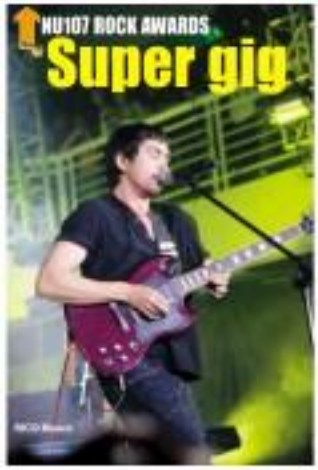


By Irene C. Pierce
Photos by Ben Cruz

DRAMA, ROCK AND ROLL. Musicians, sexy stars, medals,

Indeed...welcome to the 18th NU 107 Rock Awards, Baby!

Looks like those with a hungry eyes from the bangled fraternity members in August have something to cheer about, well, Sly Statrella fans, at least. The former Eheads bassist, Pepil, emerged as the big winner in the NU 107 Rock Awards last week, with five major awards.

Album of the Year for "Wildlife," Best Music Video Award for "Motorbook," Producer of the Year with Jeremy Monteiro for "Wildlife," Drummer of the Year for Mikoshi Garcia, and Artist of the Year.

Not bad, if you consider that their album launched recently was completed in less than a month.

"Wildlife" is Pepil's second work and marks the debut of their new drummer Garcia. Short and sweet, the 12-track album is said to be a "celebration of unforeseen circumstances." Singles "Safe" and "See Me Apart" topped the NU 107 charts.

Ten-year-old band Sandwich got three awards: Song of the Year for "Snowman," Best Live Act and Best Album Packaging by Inkoospa.com for their fifth album "+3= marin the Spot."

Sandwich is a band best experienced live—their fans danced and sang along that night.

The judges' votes were not revealed until the awards proper because Entertainment writer Rachelle Concepcion and Inquirer columnist Lourdes de Quiros, Allen Madrilejos, NBR editor in chief, Ilinaya Mariñas, Hard Rock Café marketing manager, Rachita Soares, Rogue Magazine; Robin Rivera, record producer, and Richard Calderon, former label manager and Telsia consultant.

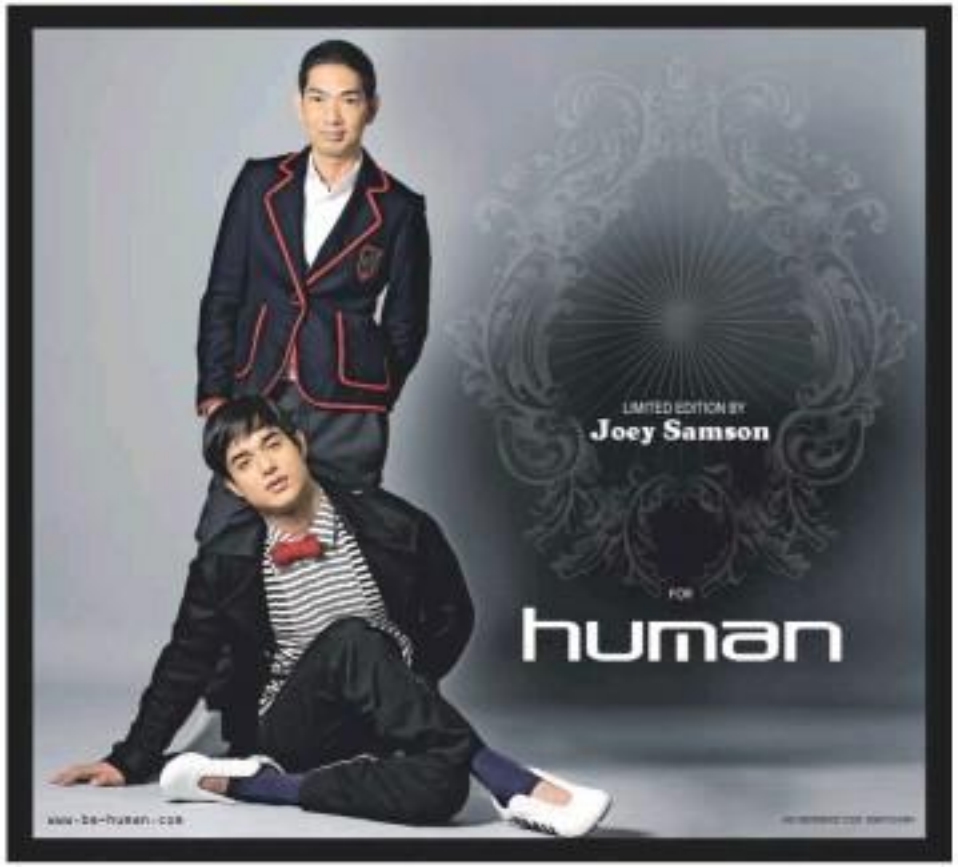
Rico Blanco won Vocalist of the Year award. The controversial musician recently left his long-time band Rivermaya to go solo, and came up with the album "Your Universe." It features collabora-

tions with Buddy Zabala of The Dawn, Arthur Lacsina of Barefoot Buskers and Cynthia Alexander. His song "Pupil" contains fierce lyrics and has two music videos.

Guitarist of the year was LG de Leon of Parokya, the band that goes by the shortest "complaint for things, regrettable puns or pagbabago." Now this award is certainly nothing to complain about.

The Out of Body Special was named Best New Artist and rightly so, the group was featured in Time Magazine as one of the "Asian Acts to Watch in 2008." "Si...ho Awards who won Bands of the Year really got the skills.

Listen to their songs "Soundcheck," "Give It" and "Sexy Beast" from the "In Love" album and you'd know why these guys who seamlessly mix rock, funk, soul,



Sophia Dingcong Aldaba Joshua Cueto

A weekly directory of the country's best establishments

Where to Stop Where to Go

Enriched city living with Ascott

WITH THE FESTIVE season drawing closer, there's nothing like relaxing a bit from the holiday rush or simply enjoying a relaxing retreat in the heart of the city. Ascott International's serviced residences — Ascott Makati, Somerset Millennium Makati, Somerset Olympia Makati and Somerset Salcedo Makati, effect third lifestyle options for you to enjoy.

Feel the difference of an elevated living experience in the newly refurbished suites of Somerset Makati with the Ascott International Special. Select special rates starting from P6,800++ plus exclusive privileges including welcome amenities featuring Godiva chocolates, complimentary daily breakfast at the Café on the 6th, free local calls and complimentary wireless Fidelity Internet connection for one unit per apartment.

A relaxing city break, Somerset Millennium Makati, Somerset Olympia Makati and Somerset Salcedo Makati present special discounts and privileges to an exclusive offer called At Home in Somerset. With rates starting from P4,320++, residents may enjoy balanced living with extra perks of complimentary welcome amenities, daily breakfast, 6-hours broadband Internet access, one-way airport transfer for 1 entitlement reservation of 7 consecutive nights, hotel rolls, one parking slot and use of recreational facilities. For your convenience additional discounts are available at 20 percent off from laundry services and 20 percent from use of the Business Center.

For more information or reservations, call the Central Reservations Office at (63-2) 715-3888, kindly quote

Ascott International Special is at home at Somerset when you make your reservations to enjoy the special rates and privileges.

The Ascott International special and At Home in Somerset is valid until Dec. 31. Rates are subject to service charge and local government tax. Promo or reservations are non-refundable. Rates may be subject to change without prior notice.

Elegant weddings at Edsa Shangri-La

THINGS and MORE, THE Philippines' leading publisher and organizer of wedding fairs, caps 2008 with a big pre-wonder event, specifically targeted for the faithful to market. Aptly titled Elegant Weddings 2008, this 2-day wedding fair will showcase wonderful new ideas for brides and grooms-to-be on Dec. 13 and 14 at the Edsa Shangri-La Hotel, Mandaluyong City, Philippines. Pre-registration through www.thingsandmore.ph.com will get free admission and exclusive giveaways from sponsors and participating exhibitors.

Major sponsor Edsa Shangri-La Hotel will feature their dream wedding set ups centered by wine international, all-covered cruises team. The Bridal Daytimes and Edsa Interactions team will be invited in various showcase to highlight hotel's expertise and handling memorable wedding banquets. Spa Edsa will also host exclusive discounts to Chi Spa. Edsa Shangri-La's Fine-cost beauty and wellness team, will be made available to visitors till 12pm each day.

With more than 150 of the Philippines' most important wedding suppliers, Elegant Weddings 2008 promises a weekend of great wedding ideas and fun for bride-to-bride to an unforgettable experience in prestige and fun for bride and groom.

For further details, call Things and More (632) 637-0793/637-0223 ext. 205 or log on online www.thingsandmore.com.

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT EDSA SHANGRI-LA

The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs held a week-long Global Forum on Migration and Development in Manila recently. The United Nations Secretary-General B.K. Ban Ki-moon was the opening address speaker. Among the delegates who attended the conference this 200-strong United Nations assembly of the G and Prime Ministers of Latvia Philippine Pizza where his and his delegation stayed along with the heads of delegations and international sponsors of the GFMD. United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was welcomed by Edsa Shangri-La Hotel Philippines general manager Raoul Lalanzado.

Crown Regency welcomes first riders/walkers at SEA

CROWN REGENCY HOTEL AND Towers will launch its Sky Experience Adventure Package on the public this Dec. 12. It will take guests on high level tours and excursions, primarily under and on the impressive very Great way to spend Christmas to the city. It is located at Crown Regency Hotel and Towers, Pasadena Gonzales Boulevard in Cebu City.

For inquiries on day experience adventures, call 233-0400 local 3772 or 0920-922-9868.

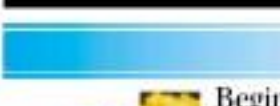
The 'dream match' live at Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila

BY WHEN THE EMPLOYEES RETIRES 9-0, named 2007 lightweight and WBC super featherweight champion, Manny "The Pacman" Pacquiao, and Olympic gold medalist and 10-time world boxing champion, Onyx "The Golden Boy" De La Hoya, as they battle it out for glory and honour. Broadcast live from Mandalay Bay and Hyatt Casino on the Las Vegas Strands in La Cabaz at Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila on Dec. 7 beginning at 8 a.m. for just P800 each, enjoy a night that will experience and watch this unforgettable event on mega projector screen while enjoying superb dining cuisine, all as well as enjoying cool drinks and food from different restaurants and bars on the same day. You can also watch this highly anticipated bout, but exclusively with your family and friends at the Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila. Pack of the newly opened Manila Bar. For reservations on the private viewing rates, call Events at 63-2-888 1234.

Christmas packages in New Horizon Hotel

THE PHILIPPINE ARCHIPELAGO, THE "Land of Smiles," and its Christmas fun. Be it especially true Filipinos are used to partake their Christmas celebrations to the longest and most festive in the world. The Philippine Christmas is also part of that tradition, and for this type all part of the celebrations. Christmas celebrations. From 25 to 100 persons, starting at 20,000 pesos, experience a Christmas in the make. Party, Buffet or more Chinese, 1st floor banquet hall. Christmas party, Christmas party and Christmas party during a free and private holiday. Discover and dispel the few misconceptions about Filipino food. Young manufacturers, during an orientation and a thoughtful party. Discover Tagalog, Christmas, sweet system, dance floor, and best guests are invited to the special hosts. Light music accompanies the Filipino food and drink offered at Gift Certificate to and to your table. For information and reservations, call (632) 520-2021 or e-mail newhorizonhotel@gmail.com.

This is very good. Thanks to all the fans. Please watch out for the music video of 'Selos'



For Members only

Text and photos by Marc Quinto

IT WAS STRAIGHT OUT OF AN EPISODE OF Martin Scorsese. We call once at Rarra and I were just about to finish a late dinner in Makati one Friday evening.

"What are you doing tonight?" the voice asked.

"Nothing" I answered.

"You want to be The Bar?"

"It has to be some place sosy. We're bored to our TRAD bored."

"Oh, I'm sure you haven't been here yet!"

"Oh, fine, we accept your invitation."

He were pleasantly surprised to find a spot ready in front of the place. Hmmm. Perhaps being a coworker has its privileges...

We met Ana in front of Members Only and we were ushered in. I half-expected a secret handshake or a password or even a stink bomb like Study gatekeepers, but I suppose my friend had made all the arrangements for us to get in.

Considering that it was around midnight, it was strange to be in a club that was half empty (or was that half-full?). We picked a spot on the second floor and examined the menu and drink list.

If I were a Looney Tunes character, my eyes would've popped out of their sockets like Roger Rabbit. But since I wasn't, I acted cool instead and ordered a beer with an air of nonchalance.

"Of course, I drink 180-peso beers all the time!," was what I tried to convey to my waitress at the jebsis.

Karen eagerly ordered an Espresso Martini, relishing the thought of bringing one of her favorite drinks together. When it arrived, she took a sip, nodded and sat back. Curious, I also took a sip, then regretted ordering beer because it was just plain yummy (it was made with vanilla vodka, sweet espresso, and Frangelico cream—we asked).

For food, we ordered something Sasa (gambas) and something more exotic (Golden Dragon Roll: sushi roll with tiger eel with crabstick, spicy mayo and sweet mango). Since they were similarly priced, I went for the new rather than the old. The Dragon Roll's individual elements came together nicely. The gambas was nothing spectacular.

Throughout our stay, service was consistently attentive. Our servers (read: plural) ensured our drinks were regularly topped up. I dropped a napkin, they picked it up. I mean-mugged the shopaholic, they straightened them. Karen eventually shouted me up.

For the next round, we opted to get a bottle of Scotch, which seemed to be the economical thing to do considering the price of single drinks. We spent the rest of the evening exchanging stories in hushed tones (while I tried to throw off our servers by regularly moving up our table).

I'm still not a Member. But I wouldn't mind nagging along with one occasionally.

The Times: MEMBERS ONLY

Address: The 31st Entertainment Center Bonifacio Global City Taguig, Metro Manila

Hours: Opens at 5 p.m., Closes at 2 a.m. (Go Taguig!)

Favorites: Golden Dragon Roll (P325), Bros (P180)'s Soda (P300), Espresso Martini (P340)

Scotch P2200 per shot / P12,000 per bottle

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Editor Nestor U. Torre • Assistant Editor Rita P. Baldo

SATURDAY Special

Gretchen's new game show marred by glitches

BARRETTO. Entertainment gave way to hectic hosting.

By Nestor U. Torre

GRETCHEN BARRETTO's new game show, "You and Me Against the World" (ABC-5, Sundays at 7 p.m.), debuted last Nov. 23 on an initially high note, with the glamorous host looking great and ensembling excited as she welcomed viewers to her latest show biz outing.

All too soon, however, excitement gave way to hectic, periodical hosting, with Gretchen pushing too hard to raise the program's energy level up the wit ante prone to laughing much too often, prompting us to lower our TV set's volume control.

Initial telecast

Come to think of it, Gretchen may have felt obliged to push hard to keep her show bright and peppy because the initial telecast's guests, Lucy Gomez and John Estrada, were on the sour and bland side, forsaking to try to crack some jokes, but most of them were clinkers, as they ended up adding to the show's woes.

Despite these initial glitches, we did manage to get the lowdown on the program's paradigm at first. But the two contestants stuck together to beat "The world" (represented by 10 studio players) in determining the popular view on a number of topics.

Come Round Two, however, the two key players compete against each other. And, to the bridged Round, the money they make for every "correct" answer is jacked up, with the top winner being afforded victory.

We say "covered" reasons because the right response may not really be what most people actually think, since "the world's" members are called upon to deal like live players' effort to second-guess them and then make money.

Why so? Because the portion of the show's weekly P1 million kitty that the contestants don't win will be shared by the 50 members of "the world"! Last Sunday, the left-over prize money was more than P800,000, so each member of "the world" went home richer by some P16,000. —Not bad for an evening's worth of little ill-toiling.

On the other hand, we note that the two key players don't make as much money as they should after working so hard to beat "the world." Their P30,000 tournament per contest emphasis should be doubled, at the very least.

Slow pickings

At 8 sun, winner Gomez went home with only P95,000 last Sunday—relatively slim pickings after such a hectic evening.

The new show's "beat the world" paradigm strikes us as rather familiar (to "The vs. 100," the game show Edu Manzano hosted last year. But, "You and Me Against the World" can still succeed on its own, if its initial glitches are ironed out.

These include the glitz telecast's show's programming, with too much time taken up by discussions, changes of answers, etc. Incidentally, these changes are also a problem, and contestants should be inhibited from making them.

Concerted effort

"The world's" collusion is an effort at-one. Since rules of its engagement for 84 present in terms of agreement, we presume that it is indeed taking place, in terms of "the world's" responses no longer reflect what its members really think, only their concerted effort to beat the key players. —There, in a nutshell, goes the show's "educational" value, leaving only competition to keep viewers entertained.

The show could also choose key players who are livelier and more with-it. That way, Gretchen could relax more and flow more up with a less hectic and giddy performance.

GOMEZ and Estrada were the initial telecast's key players.

Cross currents buffet Oscar campaigns

LEONARDO DiCaprio in "Revolutionary Road."

LOS ANGELES—AWARDS SEASON CAN sometimes feel like Thanksgiving dinner: It brings people together, but it's fraught with competing allegiances. This year, the campaign could feature some especially toasty entanglements.

Mob director increasingly demanding to other box and a directed relationship between two companies, the race is shaping up as a showcase for Hollywood politics almost as much as it is a place to honor movies.

Two studios will be competing to share the limelight with Clint Eastwood. One Eastwood contender, "Gran Torino," comes from Warner Bros., a studio that does a lot of business with Clint and that has traditionally done him proud. That partly explains why the studio has taken out Best Picture ads even before most voters have seen the movie.

However, it doesn't end there. Eastwood's other film, "Changeling," comes from Universal, where he doesn't typically work. But the studio won't shortchange the film—it comes from Universal's star-producers, Imagine, which the studio also has an interest in keeping happy. And, if that's not complicated enough, Universal has to balance its "Changeling" efforts with those for another strong contender, "Frost/Nixon," which likewise is produced by—guess who—Imagine.

Plotline

Across town, another plotline is developing: Paramount has a pair of major contenders in David Fincher's romantic fable, "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," and in Sam Mendes' broken-marriage drama, "Revolutionary Road" (released under its Paramount Vantage label). Over the past week, both films have begun rolling out to voters and newspapers. Q&As and guild screenings began last weekend for "Revolutionary Road"; "Button" was unveiled recently as an LA screening, in which Fincher participated.)

But, the movies have very different histories. "Button" was emblazoned on the Paramount lot, with a director and a star (Brad Pitt) who have ongoing relationships with the studio. "Road" is a DreamWorks project that studio management is not likewise, a divorce associated with the one.

MAID Pitt and Cate Blanchett in "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button."

Plotline

But the movies have very different histories. "Button" was emblazoned on the Paramount lot, with a director and a star (Brad Pitt) who have ongoing relationships with the studio. "Road" is a DreamWorks project that studio management is not likewise, a divorce associated with the one.

this, deserved it.

The reason DreamWorks/Paramount separation could have ironmonger in a tricky spot. Like all studios, it needs to display its crossover on movies with the best chance to win. At the same time, to sell also have to avoid any perception that it is favoring the home-grown "Button" over DreamWorks' "Road" [and "Road" producer, Scott Rudin, is sure to be watching carefully].

Perception

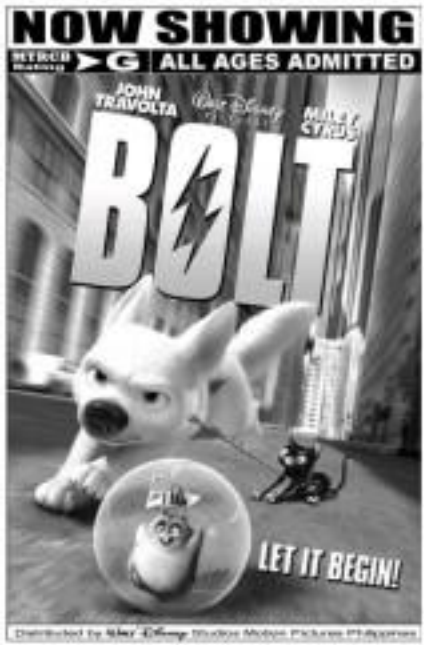
If "Road" disappointment early awards potentials, the problem probably won't present itself, and Paramount will scramble to rally behind the movie. It's doesn't, there's a question: How much should Paramount consider spending to avoid the perception that it's throwing its support to "Button"?

And "Button," a project close to Paramount's heart, brings its own dilemma: if the movie meets awards expectations, great. But what if it hasn't been hard [would Paramount keep pushing]? This would hardly be the first year that campaigns come with a consumer subplot.

In 1964, Disney's "The Lion King" was awed with four nominations [and heaps of box office] even though its champion, Jeffrey Katzenberg, had left the studio and was busily arming up rival, DreamWorks, and prepping a lawsuit against Disney, pursuing it's allegation, for the former studio boss.

With its many cross-currents, the awards season can be tricky even in a stable, two-parent situation. When divorce enters the picture, it can make for one long holiday dinner!

Reuters



THE TV host discovered her latest film's lead actor in a restaurant.

O'Donnell plucks teen from obscurity

DETROIT—REESE O'DONNELL SAW a teenager at a Detroit restaurant and thought he had a face that belonged on screen. Now, 17-year-old Phillip Johnson has the lead role in "Sweetie," a Lifetime network movie costarring O'Donnell and Kathy Bates.

Johnson, a senior at Cass Technological High School, was eating lunch at Small Plates, a popular downtown eatery, when O'Donnell spotted him and asked whether he would be interested in trying out for a film. He took a screen test the next day and won the role.

When Johnson first saw O'Donnell in the restaurant, he didn't believe it was her. "I thought it was just somebody who looked like her," Johnson, who had never acted before, told the Detroit Free Press. "I mean, what's Reese O'Donnell doing in Detroit?"

Troubled past

O'Donnell was in town to work on a movie version of a young-adult novel by Jill Frank. It's about a teenager named Amanda who has spent most of his life lost in the inner-city system. He coordinates his troubled past with help from a therapist, played by O'Donnell.

O'Donnell told "Entertainment Tonight" that she sensed "a soulful sadness" in Johnson. During a break in shooting at a former homeless shelter in the impoverished Detroit enclave of Highland Park, Johnson said he remained shocked by his luck. "It still hasn't hit me," he shared. "I won't even realize it until it comes out on TV!"

AP

Britney Spears craves freedom amid career upswing

NEW YORK—BRITNEY SPEARS is craving more freedom—and less of the "control" that has embattled her personal life and relegated the singer over the last several months.

In an upcoming behind-the-scenes documentary she [illegible] pop star shares: "If I wasn't under the restraints that I'm under right now with all the lawyers, doctors and people [illegible] everything, I'd feel liberated, and I'd feel more like myself."

The 45-minute film, "Britney: Inside the Record," airs on Nov. 30 on MTV and the Logo network. (She is shown backstage at the MTV Video Music Awards; remember them?) Titled "Coming Out", dodging the paparazzi, and goofing around with her [illegible] dress, Jeans, who controls her personal and financial affairs.

While her career takes a positive turn, Spears says that she's sad and feels that her life is "too in control." "There's no excitement, there's no passion—there's no nothing. It's like Groundhog Day' every day, you know? I'm really bored," she admits, getting teary.

Decoy

The mother of two young sons with ex-husband, Kevin Federline, says she "used to be a real chick," but the paparazzi has made it impossible for her to be out and about. So the documentary which was executive produced by Spears' manager Larry Rudolph, her security staff do most hitting a down-to-earth-be camera.

Spears' current road holds [illegible] to high gross in September when she [illegible] three VMAs, including Video of the Year. Now on the comeback trail, she has a hit song, "Womanizer," and is releasing "Circus" next month.

She talks about her [illegible] downward spiral, which included a divorce, a custody battle, public meltdowns, and a shaggily performance at last year's VMAs, when she barely made it through a [illegible] number of "Gimme More." "I've been through a lot this year—well, actually the past two or three years," she shares. "And my emotion really been battered. I've definitely grown up—big time. And I'm very weary of a lot of things, and very protective of myself."

She says she sometimes gets [illegible] "You're guarded," she adds. "You have to be that way, otherwise you get taken advantage of and get into situations like I did in the past you I really [illegible] my way. I feel [illegible] I feel ashamed—I feel like the side within me that wanted to rebel. I never wanted to become one of those pinup-[illegible]—I always wanted to feel free. That was always the part of me that got me in trouble."

Three-year relationship

Spears dished on Federline and ex-boyfriend, Justin Timberlake, in the film. "With Justin, he was a part of the inspiration of what I'd become," reveals Spears, who ended a three-year relationship with Timberlake in 2002. "Then, when he was gone, I was like, 'What am I supposed to do with myself?' I would go out just to keep my mind busy."

While she was devastated over her breakup with Timberlake, she says she handled that better than her separation from Federline in November 2006. (She recalls: "With Kevin, because I had two children with him, I don't know what to do with myself. I had built my dream home in Malibu—a huge house, a pool and a huge yard for the kids—and I did everything for them.")

She says she married Federline for the wrong reasons, instead of following her heart. As a result, she went down a "wrong path." She reckons meetings do help and when Federline began counseling on his own sooner. When it ended, "I felt so alone. I didn't want to think about the reality of it. It was like, 'Oh SH. But, I never really had it—and I just met!'" AP

SPEARS: "I love Kevin, I love my son."

GlaxoSmithKline cervical cancer vaccine now accessible to more Filipinas

In a breakthrough effort to protect more Filipino women from cervical cancer, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Philippines has announced a significant price reduction for its cervical cancer vaccine.

The landmark move highlights GSK's dedication to cervical cancer prevention and its continued advocacy to give Filipinos the quality medicines and vaccines they need at prices they can afford. Effective immediately, the vaccine will now be available at a new affordable price offering as much as 60% reduction from its original price.

"When we said that every woman deserves a chance against cervical cancer, we meant it. GSK Philippines is proud to achieve this important milestone of being the first country to make our cervical cancer vaccine affordable to more women. With this initiative, we will be able to help protect more women and their futures against the harsh realities of cervical cancer," said Rick Gain, GSK President and Managing Director.

GlaxoSmithKline's cervical cancer vaccine is the first vaccine to adopt the tissue-health philosophy. Launched in 2004, ValueHealth enabled more Filipinos to benefit from trusted GSK innovation brands at reduced prices, ranging from antibiotics, anti-asthma and cough medicines. It was GSK's response to the need of Filipinos for more affordable healthcare - a need that continues to be urgent in the case of cervical cancer as it remains the second highest cancer killer among women in the Philippines, claiming an estimated 4,308 lives out of the 6,360 cases reported each year. With the price reduction, more Filipino women can now avail of this life-saving vaccine.

GSK's cervical cancer vaccine's indication, as approved by the Bureau of Food and Drugs, is for females 10 years of age onwards. It protects against the two most common cancer-causing HPV types, 16 and 18, which together are responsible for over 70 percent of cervical cancer cases in Asia Pacific. It has also shown efficacy against persistent infection caused by 12 other cancer-causing HPV types beyond HPV 16 and 18.

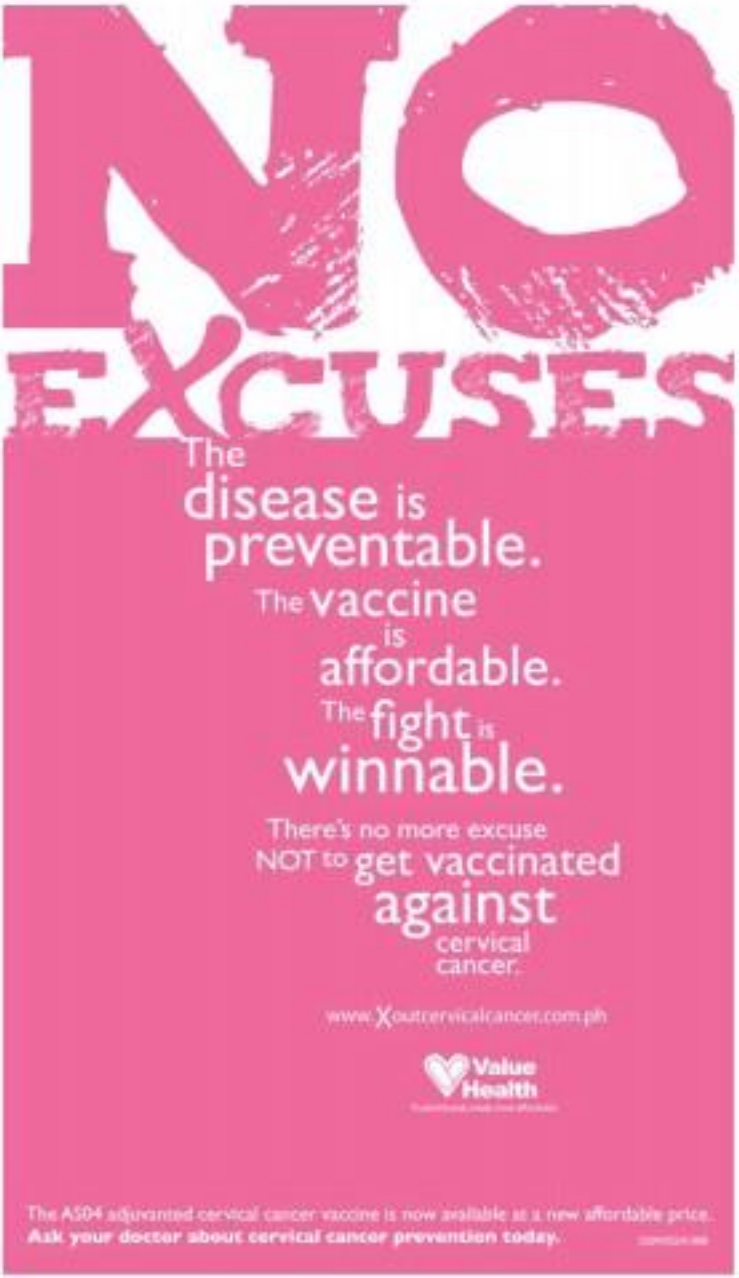
Clinical data also demonstrated that GSK's cervical cancer vaccine provides this protection for nearly six and a half years, the longest duration of protection reported to date for a cervical cancer vaccine- certainly welcome news for women as it is estimated that up to 80% will acquire an HPV virus infection in their lifetime.

With this pioneering initiative, GSK hopes to realize its vision of crossing [X-ing] out cervical cancer, enabling more Filipino women to do more, feel better and live longer.

GlaxoSmithKline: A Leader in Vaccines

GlaxoSmithKline is a leading global vaccine manufacturer committed to preventing diseases in people of all ages with innovative vaccines and delivery systems. The company is active in the fields of vaccine research, development and production with over 30 vaccines approved for marketing and 20 more in development.

As one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical and health care companies, GSK is committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer.



'Tongue in Cheek' shares whimsical view of life with heart in hand

By Nestor U. Torre

I THANK THE KIND soul who gifted me late last week with Fr. Renato L. Puentevella, SJ's book, "Tongue in Cheek," accurately subtitled, "A Jesuit's Whimsical View of Life." Fr. Puentevella was a scholastic at the Ateneo de Cagayan (Xavier University) when I was a student there—but that's another story.

More pertinently, his book derives many of its lighthearted and whimsical insights from his later years as campus minister for the grade school students of the Ateneo de Davao, who obviously love him to bits.

Anecdotes

That the feeling is fully reciprocated by their droll chaplain is clearly shown by the brief personal essays and anecdotes in the book, which were originally published in the Philippine Jesuit magazine, The Windhover.

At first reading, the anecdotes in "Tongue in Cheek" seem to be almost gratuitously nothing at all—children noting their workouts in the school chapel's nursery, puppy love among puppies, churchgoers suffering through interminable sermons, etc.

Love and wit

But, to more luxuriant appreciation that there's a lot happening here—a lot of love, wit, celebratory view of life, delight in the "small" things that aren't insignificant at all—the whole world seen upside down in the eye of a dewdrop. He's written ultimately distilled in the lens of times, our breathless—and, always with a gap-toothed, gamin smile.

A dear friend seconds the motion:

"You want a 'good read'? Pick up this book by Fr. Renato 'Ning' Puentevella, S.J.—'Tongue in Cheek'—and read.

"You all (males) are immediately intellectual. Here, some are; but not all. Certainly not Fr. Ning as he cannot access in this book.

"If you want to understand why Our Lord said, 'Allow the little children to come to me' and 'Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven'...pick up this book and read.

"In it, you will meet a Jesuit—often in living forward and fashioned, sometimes, in his eyes as a Teacher, Confessor, Counselor and Priest to Ateneo de Davao.

"You will also get a picture of the 'man' himself—in his soul shines through in every page completely honest and candid, 'without any trace of guile,' entirely human—with that beautiful and luminous trait that also looks for in a friend.

"You just in the eyes are the windows through which one sees into the innermost soul of a man. So also for the eyes through which a man looks out into the world does for 'become' like what he sees.

"In one of the passages in this book, Fr. Ning quite humbly confesses: '... for every one sinner I had loved, I did not ask for mercy; I asked for wonder. And He, the Lord, gave it to me.' (p. 123)

Sense of wonder

"It's this sense of childlike wonder that permeates the book—and all the true-to-life stories he shares with us. Joyful, the book is. Full of gratitude to God for all His gifts. For the little children who come to confess to him; for all his fellow Jesuits (characterize all): for his vocation to the Society of Jesus...and for his twilight years.

"As Fr. Ning has 'progressed' in life, he has learned not to hide his heart, but wear it on his sleeve. Thank God he has chosen—at old time just 'grace' him this way!—to share this childlike quality with us.

"Reading speaks better for itself than a passage from the very first chapter of this book, here quoted verbatim.

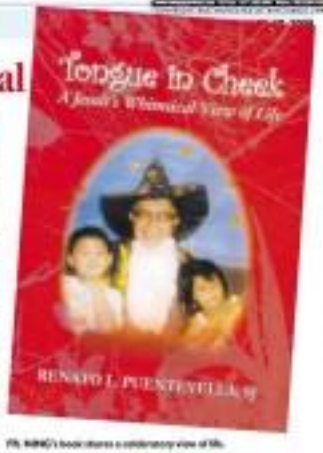
Confession

"So chaplain and retired English teacher, I sometimes get my two lives confused. During the confession of a grade school kid, I am more likely to give him a lesson in grammar than to the person spiritual advice.

"Father," confesses a 9-year old, 'I quarrel my little brother.' (The young have a time-warp. Everything is in the present tense.) 'You quarrel your little brother? I ask, myself failing to the time-warp trap. 'Yes, Sir-rine. I kick him.' 'Why?' Because he bite me.' 'He bite you? 'Why, how old is your little brother?' 'No months.'

"Stop the book. Have fun. Give it as a Christmas gift to others!"

(Available at National Bookstore, the book is published by the Ateneo de Davao University Research and Publications office.)



FR. NING's book shares a celebratory view of life.

BIYES. Dreams for success.

SPECIAL. Discovery Center's cinematic treat examines the scientific puzzle of the Star of Bethlehem.

HALLMARK CHANnel gets viewers high on holiday cheer with these viewing treats: Dec. 6 at 9 p.m., "12 Days of Christmas Eve." Dec. 15, join Cody Cullen as he journeys to a small town to meet the "Christmas Card" sender who touched his life.

Dec. 20, "All I Want for Christmas." Dec. 24, "Road to Christmas" is about a journey that changes people's lives. Dec. 25, "Grandpa for Christmas" tells a story of forgiveness. Dec. 2, "Where When."

MONTAGE

'Tatlong Kuwento ni Lola Basyang'

Enduring tales from the most beloved Filipino storyteller, Lola Basyang, will be retold through drama in Ballet Manila and the Manila Broadcasting Company presents the grand holiday season production, "Tatlong Kuwento ni Lola Basyang," featuring Lisa Macuja-Elizalde, at the Aliw Theater, CCP Complex from Dec. 5 to 14. Call 400-8282.

Kids' Choice Awards Philippines

The first-ever Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards Philippines will be handed out today at the Aliw Theater. Hosted by Michael V and featuring live stars, special surprises and tons of slime, the fun event honors viewers' choices of the most popular and admired luminaries in show business.

With Love, Myrus

Many prospective singing superstars TV talent searches in the Philippines, but now recording artist, Myrus, took the path less traveled. He showcased his singing talent on the social networking site, Friendster, where he was discovered by public artist icons extraordinaire, Ciara Cabling.

What came through most impressively in Myrus showcases? His versatility is his strength. He can belt songs from standard to pop, classics to R&B—as convincingly proven by the vampire-ling and delightful songs in his debut album, "Love Cycle." For booking inquiries, call 706-3373.

Noel Discovery Bazaar

Ongoing until Nov. 30 at the World Trade Center is the UMA Rajawa Network and Cor International's Noel Discovery Bazaar and Christmas shopping Expo, with hundreds of products, fashion lines and Christmas items at rock-bottom prices.

Cheetah Girls movie

The Disney Channel premiers the third installment of "The Cheetah Girls: One World" at 7:30 p.m. on Nov. 30. In this colorful movie, the Cheetah Girls get cast in a Bollywood musical.

Cristine Reyes' new look

Only 19 years old, Cristine Reyes has impressed TV-film producers as much that some of them predict that she will raise go as 2009's hottest new female star. Time for her to show her mettle, as she's signed a star-bing endorsement deal with the trendy Mist fashion and accessories line.

Cristine and Mist are perfect for each other, because the fashion line loves to dress up the young women and men of today according to their daily needs.

Active Vista film festival

At Robinsons Galleria indefinite, the ongoing Active Vista film festival today session: 1 p.m., Pedro Penn documentaries, "Mga Gitong Ibanese" and "Gusto Ko Nang Mag magaral?" At 3 p.m., Raymond Red's "Iyong" and "Mid" (Best Student Short Films). At 5:30 p.m., Brangay-tow Marathon. At 9 p.m., Raymond Red's "Bayang."

Nov. 28. At 3 p.m., Dibi Cecilio's "Bayan." At 6 p.m., Jim Libiran's "Tribu." At 9 p.m., Jay Abello's "Nanay."

Darts tournament

The Philippine International Darts Open will be held on Dec. 5-7 at the Taste Hall of Sarmedi. Edsa Shaw. Call 328-3287.

"GRANDPA FOR CHRISTMAS." The holiday drama tells story of forgiveness.

'Mystery of the Christmas Star'

The SM Science Discovery Center at Mall of Asia has 40 exhibits in 10 exciting galleries to explore, including the country's only state-of-the-art Digistar Planetarium.

This Christmas season, its special treat is the movie, "Mystery of the Christmas Star," which takes viewers back 2,000 years ago and regales them with the majesty and mystery of the scientific puzzle of the Star of Bethlehem. Call 556-1151.

MYMP in 'Back-to-Back-to-Back'

Music artist, Jam Fernandez and Chin Alcantara, the MYMP duo, are on Cloud Nine these days, because their dream of performing with their musical heroes, Side A and Freestyle, will come true on Dec. 5. That's when they unfold the unique concert, "Back-to-Back-to-Back," at the Amanda Coliseum. Call 911-5555.

Last year, MYMP's album, "New Horizon," turned gold in only three months, and the group was recognized as "Best Acoustic Act" by the MTV Music Awards.

THE HIM! recording artist was discovered on the social networking site, Friendster.

Hill fulfills dream with Christmas projects

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE—FAITH HILL has finally received the Christmas gift she's always wanted. She performed her favorite holiday songs with a 31-piece orchestra, a nine-member choir, and an elaborate stage set for a TV special.

"It has always been a dream of mine, both as a young girl and performer," Hill said in an e-mail of the performance, which was taped for an installment of the Public Broadcasting Service's popular "Soundstage" series.

Hill taped the show, an exclusive performance of her new "Joy to the World" CD, at the Tennessee Center for the Performing Arts in Nashville to an audience of 3,000. PBS will begin airing the program on Thanksgiving week and repeat it through December.

Important

During the show, Hill sings "Where Were you Christmas?," "O Come, All Ye Faithful," "What Child Is This?" and other songs from her new album. "It was important to me to marry the music on the album, the way it was performed on the CD, with the presentation onstage," she shared.

Hill, 41, said she drew from Christmas records by Burt Ives, Sue Ring Crin and Elvis Presley to get the sound she wanted. "Our period of Christmas music evokes thoughts of the season no matter what time of year I hear those songs. It strikes a chord with me!"

AP

HILL. Performs her favorite holiday songs with 31-piece orchestra.

IN THIS ISSUE
Hollywood producers juggle many roles A2

SATURDAY Special

Hugh Jackman dishes on being the Sexiest Man Alive

LOS ANGELES—"WE LAUGH about it a lot at home," quipped Hugh Jackman about being named the Sexiest Man Alive by People magazine. Hugh settled into an evening roast at The Roy Carlton in Central Park wearing a black shirt and pants one reserves afternoons. With his new title, he probably got more serious by then and...

A few days earlier, before we met him to New York, Hugh got stuff' attacks from the audience when he was called by director Baz Luhrmann to help introduce their epic movie, "Australia," in a special screening at Fox Studios' Tuscan Theaters in LA.

"I bought about 400 copies of the magazine to give out to all my friends in Australia," Hugh said with a smile. "There are my frustrations. Friends who wouldn't e-mail. I didn't want to open them, I just saw the subject lines. Many of them sent me cold photos of me as a young man on Bondi, and they said, 'I'm taking this photo to the press.' There are at least 50 like that. They never, 'So this is the Sexiest Man Alive?' And I'm like, 'Please, don't throw that photo!' Laughs). Some of the ones I loved were: 'I've got twins shots sexier than you.' This is more ridiculous than the Florida 2000 recount. 'You've got to be kidding me! There's Clooney, Pitt, Damon, and they give it to you? This is a travesty of justice. Give it back immediately. Love, Bill' (laughs)."

THE DRIVER Jackman and Sarah Ellerard revel in the excitement and romance of their adventure in Luhrmann's "Australia."

Sense of humor

"So, there are plenty of people to keep my feet on the ground, that's for sure," added Hugh, who is tapping his thunderous sense of humor and down-to-earth attitude to deal with the unwelcome attention that's beating the likes of Brad Pitt, Daniel Craig (who was a close second), David Beckham, Johnny Depp, George Clooney, Tim Dunn, Tom Hanks, Robert Pattinson and Michael Phelps for the title.

First on the list of folks who are good-naturedly ribbing Hugh about his new appellation is his wife, actress Deborra-Lee Furness. Hugh joked: "My wife didn't miss a beat. The first thing she said was, 'Finally. I don't have to keep it a secret anymore (laughs).' Then, she quite seriously added, 'Really? So, how does it work? Does your publicist announce you, or something like that?' I replied, 'No. They just kind of ring.' She said, 'Really? So, why didn't Brad get it?' (laughs)."

Asked about his initial reaction, the "Kitty" star answered, "I was like, 'Yeah? What?' I actually did think it was a joke when I first heard it from someone I knew very well—my publicity partner I thought, 'Oh, that sounds like his sense of humor.' To give you an example of how I felt, I've got to tell you a little story about when we did the shoot for that magazine issue. Those things are shrouded in secrecy, so the point where we did a photo shoot and only the photographer and the person from People magazine knew. Nobody else was allowed to know what it was for."

He added, "I didn't know that when I went in. I have hair and makeup person who I work with in Australia whenever I do shoots. I walked in and said, 'Morning, guys.' They said, 'Hi, how are you?' I said, 'Guys, mate listen. Today all I'm going to say is, you've got to really lift your game. Because you have to pull out a miracle.' I told them what it was for. They said, 'What are you talking about?' I answered, 'Well, People magazine has decided to put me on the cover as "The Sexiest Man Alive." This was their reaction (with his face, he demonstrated their disbelieving look for several seconds). "What? You?" There are my hair and makeup people, right? It normally wears a little longer than that. Then, I said, 'Alright, this is may too long a pause (laughs).'"

Shower scene

The sexiest rag couldn't have come at a better time. In "Australia," a grand-scale movie of romance, drama, action, adventure and comedy in the tradition of those old Hollywood epics, this lovingly photographed Hugh as if the filmmaker knew in advance that People would crown his cowboy-playing self.

There's even an outdoor shower scene that unabashedly shows off the buff physique of Hugh in all its oiled and international glory. It's a wink-wink, nod-nod moment. Had this film been done four years earlier, it would have been a blink, instead, pouring water on herself.

Asked about the scene, the 40-year-old actor grabbed the chance to explain "Australia" as pure entertainment, not a very serious work about his beloved homeland on the brink of World War II.

Hugh recalled, "That scene is a very good way to understand the film. I said to Baz, 'I see what you're doing. I understand the romantic and the humor. I know what you're going for. But, I'm not Old-garment sure that people will.' I don't remember him telling us frames' and shooting it in slow motion, within that, people are getting it.

"He said to me, and this is pure Baz. 'Hugh, I know what you're saying. Only if we go for it 120 percent will it work. If we back off at all or if we show any lack of courage, it will fall flat, and it will be a total disaster!' Well, Hugh's adventure will be happy to know that he and Baz didn't hold back.

The actor laughingly shared how some of the male crew members humored him when they filmed this shower scene: "We did one shot, and, of course, no one said a thing. We went in for the close-up, and I had to go and put on more fake tan. Trust me, I put fake tan more than I've ever put on in my life! I applied oil that didn't make the fake tan run. So, I went off into the sun and did that. When I came out, half the crew had their shirts off and had oiled up. The lesser guy was standing there like this (he shamed how the lesser guy found his arm muscles, as if comparing for a bodybuilder's title). I loved that moment!"

Grand entrance

Hugh acknowledged that he probably never looked so good onscreen as he does in this movie. He declared, "In a Baz film, it doesn't matter who you are, you're never going to look as good again in a movie!"

He teased him: Nicole should have demanded just as many bring shots as Hugh had. In one formal ball scene, Hugh makes a grand entrance in a dazzlingly manner.

JACKMAN shared his wife, Deborra-Lee Furness' quip regarding his selection: "Finally! So, why didn't Brad get it?"

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10 movies you shouldn't watch online

NEW YORK—MOVIES ARE increasingly creeping online, as video sites like YouTube and Hulu are adding feature films to their extensive libraries. At the Google-owned YouTube, there's the YouTube Screening Room, which every two weeks, with four new films—mostly independent works—is the site. Hulu, the joint creation of NBC Universal and News Corp., has hundreds of films available for stream, from "Book Smarter" to "Wuthering Heights."

Of course, many people download films illegally on the Internet, and that number is nevertheless becoming more populated legally online. Hulu recently added 1962's "Lawrence of Arabia," which raises the question: Should anyone watch a nearly four-hour-long epic of sweeping grandeur on their laptop? Or, heaven forbid, their cell phone? Here are the top 10 films that should never be brought down to size:

1. "Lawrence of Arabia": David Lean's film, which won seven Oscars, including Best Picture, was made for the big screen—particularly as projected in all of its 70-millimeter glory. Though flicks like YouTube's nascent films in high quality, the intensity of the Arabian desert loses something when dunked in a four-inch by six-inch screen.

2. "Last of the Mohicans": Michael Mann 's 1992 adaptation of James Fenimore Cooper's novel pulses with the raw nature of early America as its much-like-the-film critic, David Thomson, has written. But he expects William Wordsworth to pop up at any moment. You aren't get that rugged feeling on a computer.

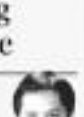
3. "Avatar": Really, how scary can that shark be if he's ten inches tall?

4. "Worlds by Scorsese": Martin Scorsese's "Gangs of New York" and "The Aviator" are nevertheless becoming more populated legally online. Hulu recently added 1962's "Lawrence of Arabia," which raises the question: Should anyone watch a nearly four-hour-long epic of sweeping grandeur on their laptop? Or, heaven forbid, their cell phone? Here are the top 10 films that should never be brought down to size:

COMPUTERS will diminish the visual grandeur of Lean's (left) and Reed's acclaimed films.

THE CLASSICS of Hitchcock, Mann and Badham should be seen on the big screen.

Satisfy that craving for Chinese cuisine



WORD OF MOUTH

Sandy Lucas

IN THE EARLY YEARS OF MY CAREER, my basis for "authentic" Chinese cuisine was what you'd find in fandom House on West ave. I used to go there once a month and I was in dishes like sweet and sour pork, pan fry, coconut rebounds and fried rice. Today, it's one of the places where I find comfort food.

When travel became part of my existence, complications started to creep in. It was during one of my trips to Hong Kong when I first experienced authentic Chinese cuisine. All of a sudden, my standard changed, and it was already harder to satisfy my once simple palate. Many of the restaurants I once considered "authentic" fell into a Filipino-Chinese category, like Swiss People cuisine, Bruges, and a number of vegetarian restaurants found in Chinatown and Binondo.

Unique style

Don't get me wrong, these dining places have their unique style of cooking. In fact, there are many local versions that I prefer, like Mr. Min Lok's express and siomai, some local punch, lumpiang sariwa, and others.

Soon, however, competition between Chinese restaurants became stiff. Many of our top restaurants brought in Chinese chefs from Hong Kong.

Recently, I experienced once such restaurant where I was lured those to have roasted goose for lunch. Those were just two of us—Rong and I—sharing four dishes: Sweet and sour pork, roasted goose, Shanghai crabs, and a spinach dish topped with dried scallops.

The meat goose was perfectly deboned and was served with a plum dipping sauce on the side. The skin was crisp, the meat tender and absolutely delicious. We agreed that it was better than the one served by Yung Kee (which specializes in roast goose) in Hong Kong.

The sweet and sour pork was crunchy and authentic-tasting, and was drowned in the crabs. All in all, the meal was superb. (A number of chefs have told me that goose and duck fat are not harmful to health.) Ben Chong, the manager, sent us the perfect after-drink: A piping hot pot of ginger tea.

If you want to experience Hong Kong-style cuisine, check out Bai Hua Lou at 810 Arnaiz st. (formerly Pasay rd.), Makati City. I was told many of our local tapsters frequent the place. Need I say more?

Happy eating!

E-mail: sandydsucas@yahoo.ca

Costner indulges passion for music

SAINVILLE, TENNESSEE—HE'S PLAYED WYATT Earp, Robin Hood and Elliot Ness in the movies, but Kevin Costner says his most natural gig is playing music with his band. "This is as close to my personality as it ever get—jumping live," Costner recently shared. "When I'm making a movie, I'm playing a character. But, my personality comes out onstage when I play live. That's when you see the real me."

Costner, 53, and his band, Modern West, released their debut CD, "Untold Truths," recently. The disc features 12 songs, half of them written by Costner, who's the lead singer and plays guitar. The sound is western-rock, with elements of country. The group is signed to Nashville-based Universal Records South.

No newcomer

"I grew up with Western because I was born in Compton, California, but everytime I do a song, it sounds like something from Oklahoma," he beamed.

Costner is no newcomer to music. He was trained on piano and sang in the church choir as a kid. He's been writing and performing with a group for almost 20 years.

As his wife's urging, he started pursuing it more seriously a few years ago. He recalled, "She prodded me every three or four months. She said, 'You're really happy when you play music. You should do this!'"

"I never intended to make a record," he admitted. "I just wanted to play live, but I seemed to do original songs. People heard them and approached us for it." The band gave a few performances at Nashville—including one at the venerable Grand Ole Opry on occasion with this year's Country Music Association awards.

Time-consuming

They'll continue touring this year and into 2009. But, don't look for Costner to change jobs. He'll keep making movies and says he wants to do more directing, which he describes as enormously time-consuming. "But, doesn't something about playing music does less stress out," he enthused.

While a number of musicians have made the transition to acting, not many actors have successfully moved in music. Costner couldn't think of a single one. But, that doesn't scare him. "What scares me is not trying. I'm confident of how we sound, and I'm confident that an evening with us will be remembered."

AP

Hugh Jackman dishes on being the Sexiest Man Alive

To see page E

white dinner jacket. "It's the very first scene we shot, because I was still skinny-skinny," recalled Hugh, who evokes Clark Gable, definitely not Wolverine, in the scene (he sports a beard through most of the movie).

"He had to do it either at the beginning or the end. That first close-up was the very first scene, and it took three hours to shoot. That's one and half hours of fighting. I remember thinking, 'Oh, I love Baz Luhrmann, this is fantastic!'

"I also remember my wife being there that day," Hugh chimed in with a naughty grin. "She said to me, 'Make sure you wear that underwear.' And I said, 'I'm not.' I thought, 'Yes, this is going to be good for me!' It's a little worrying, though, because, aesthetically, you probably will never look as good as you do in a Baz Luhrmann movie."

Since he and Nicole Urban, his wife (she's been female for years), we asked Hugh how they both shed their inhibitions as lovers in the film. "You're pretending that I'm inhibited about it," he joked. "She and my wife [Deborra-Lee Furness] became a bonus together when we first came to Hollywood. So, they've been really close. When you get married, you become friends, but you're not always the closest buddies. She was always his friend. My mission a lot, but, in some way, I never really knew her. He didn't have an independent friendship, so to speak."

Best situation

He continued, "In hindsight, it was really the best situation where we started working together. We were friends, but there was a lot there. I didn't know about her. The worst thing that can happen in movies is relationships [you have] each other. That, without a doubt, is the worst thing. Because you're going to go into the room, and it's boring, ultimately. We and I were on a four-hour-long ride down to Patagonia—Bolivia south of Sydney four before we were alone to cross a river, the rudup beside us and said, 'We should talk about our seven relationships.' And I thought, 'Oh, OK [laughs].'

"We had a very frank, honest and, dare I say it, fairly adult conversation about what we needed to achieve. That's sort of where it began. I'm thankful for that, because it's a hell of a lot easier when you're just up-front."

So, how did Deborra take his kissing scenes with Nicole? "I was very relieved when I saw the movie with my wife," Hugh answered. "That first kiss, which is long, right? We and I are coming together, and man we, when you're sitting with your wife and watching that kissing scene, it's even longer. We and I are going together, and then finally, my wife leaned into me and said, 'That was great!' I thought, that was the actor in her. But, about 10 minutes later, there's a montage of us kissing. Nic and I are kissing on the bed, on the porch, on horses, in the hillside. In the middle of that, Deb literally said, 'Alright, that's enough!' She didn't say it quietly. She was behind me. I heard him laugh."

Kissing scene

"She's not bossy at all, no," Hugh said of Nicole, who plays a pilary Dwill, at first wrongfully from England who goes to Australia and meets his character, a cattleman simply named The Drover. "Not with me, anyway [laughs]." He cited the advantage of researching an actress who's almost as tall as he is: "It's nice to do a kissing scene with someone, where I don't have to be in a ditch, or the girl has to stand on a box!"

Nicole's present and exchange hands, Keith Urban and Tom Cruise, respectively, should take note. Hugh said with a chuckle: "I remember her saying to me, 'Wow, there you are!' I don't think she's used to looking up before kissing."

When asked to describe what he finds sexy, Hugh quipped, "Like I'm somehow an expert now ..." He obliged with, "Probably, the clothing thing about not appeal or eminence is ... confidence is not actually the right word. It's knowing who you are. When you're with someone who's got a deep understanding of who she is—and she's comfortable enough with herself to not be self-obsessed. I find that sexy in women. It's beyond looks. It's indefinable, but you can think of the different types of women I find sexy.

"Definitely, a sense of humor is important. In my wife's case, it's courage. The more you get to know someone and her vulnerability, you see her in a deeper manner: you may be the only person in the room who knows what she's going through. When you see people triumphing over their fears, I find that sexy."

So, what is the Sexiest Man's take on romance? "I'm not a huge fan of flamboyant, schematic or routine," he replied. "In romance, the key element is surprise. Probably what that shows is that you're thinking about them all the time. You try to make them feel special. I've been married for 13 years, and I know that's not for 13 years, and I know that's not how that is the history of the world, that's not long, but, in Hollywood, that's fairly long! After 13 years, you can sometimes get in a rut. We do the same things. I go to the same restaurants. My wife never got in a rut. She's amazing that way. I have to be reminded more than twice. She feels like. I'm working my life. There are so many other reasons." I find that really romantic and sexy, too!"

E-mail: rmopales_10@yahoo.com, and read his blog, "The Manila Report," on http://blog.inquirer.net/manilareport

John Legend eyes the stadium

LEGEND: Advocacy against poverty is strong.

NEW YORK—A PLATINUM CD is hardly a disappointment, especially in these rocky times, when even rappers are find it hard to crack the one-million mark.

But, John Legend admits to being slightly disappointed in the response to his last album, "Once Again." It's not that it was a flop compared to hit duets, "Get Lifted," which also went platinum. And it's not like he didn't win accolades off of his sophomore CD. He earned a Grammy and was line for a pair on his resume.

But, the retro—soul CD, while a critical and commercial success, didn't have any true breakout hits, and didn't grow his audience like he had hoped.

Friend and mentor

So, with his new CD, "Evolver," Legend is aiming to become an artist that one fill person, not just thousands. He has some big-time help. Not only is friend and mentor, Kanye West, back for an encore, Legend also called in Andre 3000, Stevie and Pharrell. Superstar from the interview:

You say your new record features a more side of you.

One of the things that I was thinking was, "You know, I wanna go from being a theatre artist to an arena artist." And, part of my thinking when I was doing this was what album do I have to produce to make that transition? First of all, I need to make songs that are going to fill up an arena and feel like they belong in that big space. I wanted to make bigger sounding songs and more anthemic sounding songs. Then I just wanted to be more successful than I've been in the past. But, when you actually get in the studio, it's not really about the overall goals, it's about going in trying to make a great song.

Besides to your artist and also maybe a big debut on the charts this year to the United States. How did working on Estelle help you in your executive position?

He finished Estelle's album pretty much before I even finished mine, so I actually learned from working her album with her, because I was very involved. It actually helped me realize that my writing voice could be applied to different beats than what I was using on the record album. It made me realize that because I can write on different beats, I can work with different producers. It made me realize that because I can work with different producers, I can work with different artists. Basically, I'm super-free in the interview.

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You say your new record features a more side of you.

One of the things that I was thinking was, "You know, I wanna go from being a theatre artist to an arena artist." And, part of my thinking when I was doing this was what album do I have to produce to make that transition? First of all, I need to make songs that are going to fill up an arena and feel like they belong in that big space. I wanted to make bigger sounding songs and more anthemic sounding songs. Then I just wanted to be more successful than I've been in the past. But, when you actually get in the studio, it's not really about the overall goals, it's about going in trying to make a great song.

Estelle to your artist and also maybe a big debut on the charts this year to the United States. How did working on Estelle help you in your executive position?

He finished Estelle's album pretty much before I even finished mine, so I actually learned from working her album with her, because I was very involved. It actually helped me realize that my writing voice could be applied to different beats than what I was using on the record album. It made me realize that because I can write on different beats, I can work with different producers. It made me realize that because I can work with different artists. Basically, I'm super-free in the interview.

Reality show is a must-see for parents of 'little savages'

By Lito Bertos-gen Abarca

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A young child in a restaurant so completely throwing a tantrum so loudly that you wish you could tie him to his chair? Well, that's nothing compared to what we saw on "Supernanny," a reality TV program aired on the 2nd Avenue channel that caters to desperate parents who want to tackle issues in their homes.

We couldn't believe our eyes when we saw little "supernanny"—actually, Jess uses five teachers between the ages 2 and 9—crying, kicking, hitting and yelling at one another (including their parents) as they played, watched television or ate dinner.

Playground

They simply couldn't sit still. They scampered around and climbed on every piece of furniture in the house they lived. The oldest boys drew lines on the couch and hopped from one chair to another as though they were in a playground!

Their parents—a New York police officer and a stay-at-home mom—simply needed to grab the boys in their arms and restrain them. The challenge: They were to attend a sit-down dinner, to validate the kids' grandparents had invited them.

So, a professional nanny was flown in from England to observe the family's routines at home. You can imagine how horrified she was at seeing the children's "antics" behavior.

Her shock her head as the boys' utter disrespect for their parents, and at their ability to physically and verbally hurt one another. She discovered that it was a night-and-day job to prepare the kids to take to the family van for a stroll at the park! She also noticed that the parents didn't agree on how to handle their kids.

After two days of taking down notes—and keeping her cool—the nanny had a heart-to-heart talk with the boys' parents and told them her observations. She then came up with a plan that detailed the children's activities—from the time they woke up until they retired for the night. She told them that little children needed structure in their home life.

So, the kids were ready to observe a "time-out" whenever they misbehaved. They father explained to them that they should learn to obey—or suffer consequences. And, of course, the parents were made to understand what made their actions unacceptable.

Sure enough, the parents' open misbehavior and permissiveness and the nanny's encouragement were paid off—the children began to stroll at the dinner table, and even helped set another with the dishes. And, they started saying "please" and "thank you."

Naturally, their grandparents were pleasantly surprised when they showed up. They were quiet and polite!

The last scene showed the parents' weeping upon witnessing the change in their kids' behavior. They realized how satisfying it was to teach children respect!

Nicole Kidman plays transsexual in period drama

KIDMAN: Plays a man who goes through sex change operations.

LOS ANGELES—NICOLE KIDMAN at the world's first post-op transsexual, married to Cheslie Thurnell. You heard me. Australian actress will star in and produce "The Danish Girl," based on the true story of Danish artists, Einar and Gerda Wegener. Their marriage took a sharp left turn after Einar (Kidman) stood in for a female model that Gerda (Thurnell) was set to paint.

True story

When their portraits become wildly popular in 1920s Copenhagen, Gerda encouraged her husband to adopt the female guise. What began as a humorous game led Einar to a traumatic pursuit and landmark 1930 operation that shocked the world and devastated their love.

Aramd Tucker ("Shopgirl") is attached to direct the feature, adapted by writer Lucinda Coxon ("Wild Target") from David Ebershoff's 2000 Viking bestseller.

Bob's Rideaux and Thomas manuel Chris Bent is also Grace playing lesbian characters in "The Hours" and "Monster," respectively.

Reuters

Setting Hopes and Dreams
A look at Meralco's First Sibol School

(Last of two parts)

By KIRK PAULINUS R. CAMPOS

REBECCA de Leon with son Jefferson

GOOD FOUNDATION: The parents are proud that their children are studying at the First Sibol School. The school standards that their children's strengths are polished. All of them agree that the School has helped their children build self-confidence.

Laarni Lozada braces for musical stardom

By Rito P. Asilo

FINDING ONE'S RIGHTFUL PLACE IN the entertainment sun is never easy. Getting your foot in the door via talent searches is just the first step, but hard work and a lot of luck are key in sustaining a performer's popularity.

The same is true for "Pinoy Dream Academy Season Two's" Grand Star Treasure, Laarni Lozada, who bravely let musical stardom with the release of her self-titled debut album this week.

Her debut album is more a showcase of her belting ability than a testament to her multifaceted skills.

Signature song

Lozada demonstrated her versatility and range on the ABS-CBN talent show, but her debut album, "Laarni Lozada," is more a showcase of her belting ability than a testament to the multifaceted skills that impressed "PDA" viewers and non-voters. The collection features 11 tracks, including her signature song, "Manalig Ka," from the musical "PDA Inihahain Ang Cuyahoyah" album, but five of them are remakes.

Not every cut is for keeps. The first track, "Sana Ikaliling Ka Niya," has the dreamy melodic allure of a hit ballad, and her sweet version of Rosella Hara's hit song, "Bakit Iiga Sa Akala Kita?," is just as appealing. But, while Lozada sings her songs with infectious gusto, they also demonstrate the need for the singer to polish her skills further.

In "Sana Ikaliling Ka Niya," for instance, she's not as sure-pitched as she should be, and she slides through the first notes of the verse' melodic lines. Unfortunately, hit-and-miss singing is a big no-no if you're aiming for reliability and musical polish. Moreover, she needs to brush up on her diction—seems like she doesn't mind getting her wilted pronunciations immortalized on CD.

Without a doubt, "Manalig Ka" is also a show-stopper, but watching Laarni perform Mr. C's vocally demanding song during live performances is an unsettling experience—because there's no guarantee she'll pull it off with as much panache as the recorded version.

Of course, there's always room for improvement and growth, and we're eagerly rooting for her to develop more confidence and stability in her singing, because her talent deserves no less.

Quality

Lozada's vocal instrument has a rich, malleable and full-bodied quality that allows her to shift between chest-singing and classical placement with ease but, unlike Regine Velasquez or Lyssel Gaerlan's voice, its timbre and tone are neither unique nor distinctive—in fact, she sometimes sounds like many of the music industry's dime-a-dozen belt princesses.

For now, though, let's give Laarni enough time to find her true voice—and we're keeping our fingers crossed that she'll finish it before the next Star Treasure comes along!

Holly Golightly continues to charm 50 years later

NEW YORK—THE SCENE THAT made it memorable in more a time to breakfast; Audrey Hepburn, gowned in Givenchy black with long gloves, fat pearls and sunglasses, stepping out of the car through a Tiffany's window with Danish and coffee in hand.

Having breakfast on the street was never so glamorous. Hepburn's role as Holly Golightly, the eccentric party girl of the 1961 film, "Breakfast at Tiffany's," seemed like the screen icon was another role model for young women who fantasized about moving to New York to live the same bewildering, whimsy lifestyle.

Truman Capote based Hepburn in the part. The author had wanted Marilyn Monroe for the Hollywood adaptation of his 1958 novella contained in "Breakfast at Tiffany's: 3 (Short Novel) and Three Stories," he complained that the elegant Hepburn was inferior to Holly a Texas runaway who reinvents herself as a Manhattan It Girl. The Holly of Capote's imagination was a blonde like Monroe, who had a challenging childhood growing up as Norma Jean Baker.

Happy ending

The movie rolled up and glossed over the deeply tragic undercurrent of Capote's story. An aimless barfly heroine who drinks too much dies as her last resource and a coach to avoid the pain of her past. It added a happy ending and romance with a writer named Paul (George Peppard), a kept man who declares his eager manna when he falls in love with Holly.

"The book is more authentic," remarks Capote's biographer, Gerald Clarke, who devotes it a "redemption". to love-spiked women rather than a cautionary tale about a little girl lost to the big city. "The movie is a confection—a sugar-coated spin-coated."

"Breakfast at Tiffany's" continues to sell about 50,000 copies a year, and was recently reissued in a 50th anniversary edition by Hologo. The cover design shows a pale hypnotized hand clasping a pearl; the black background has been torn, revealing red underneath and the lettered title scrawled in white.

Holly had a spare walk-up apartment, stories of admirers and a cat she refused to name. She also suffered from what she called "the mean reds," her term for anxiety. Her cure for that was to hail a cab to the Tiffany's flagship store on Fifth Avenue.

Kind eyes

"It calms me down right away...the quietness and the grand look of it; nothing very bad could happen to you there, see with those kind eyes in nice suits, and the lovely silver and diligent waiters," she declared. "If I could find a real-life place that made me feel like Tiffany's, then I'd buy some furniture and give the cat a name."

Clarke says Holly was Capote's favorite creation and an amalgam of different stylish women in his circle: Gloria Vanderbilt , Carol Matthews, Oona Chaplin, Doris Lilly and his mother, Nina, who vanquished her near Southern upbringing by dropping the name Lillie Mae. (The fictional Holly's real name: Lulamae Barrow.)

According to Clarke's biography, "Capote," Lilly—a fun-loving girl about town—called up a friend after the book was published, screaming: "It's me! It's me!" Everyone claimed to be Capote's muse in what he called "The Holly Golightly Sweepstakes."

But, Holly is also a projection of the "In Cold Blood " author, as its name for his writing as his social networking. In 1966, he gave a masked ball at New York's Plaza Hotel in honor of Washington Post publisher, Katharine Graham. Invitations were tough to get; royal-lineers and wife, Mia Farrow, dressed with the Vanderbilts and Rockefellers, and the literary giants of the day, like Norman Mailer. Capote's Black and White Ball, was later memorialized in the book, "Party of the Century," which, for many, it was.

Free spirit

It was the type of event Holly certainly would have evaded. "She was a free spirit," Clarke recalls. "She lived her life, took life on her terms, did just what she wanted—and got away with it! And Truman did the same thing. He did what he wanted, and most of the time got away with it."

Neal Gabler, an author and cultural critic, wonders if the spunky heroine could only have been imagined by a gay man such as Capote. "Because a heterosexual man wouldn't have imagined her, and I'm not sure that woman would have imagined her that way," notes Gabler, whose books include "Life, the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality."

Portrayed hauntingly by Hepburn, Holly represented a "anxious rebel" without a cause—a female type not seen in movies at the time that were dominated by the hero like Mole Maverick, as embodied by actors like Marlon Brando, Paul Newman and James Dean.

The upwardly mobile Holly loved the good life—thanks, to no small part, to the rich men who paid her $50 to go to the powder room. Despite her checkered past, she had a chic fashion sense. Black and pink and lauded with accessories, like a big hat and extravagant cigarette holder, Hepburn's wardrobe of Givenchy dresses dazzled against the early 1960s Modernist dramascape.

Perfect idea

"What you get from the movie is a perfect idea of how to marry glamour, eccentricity and style," muses Sloane Crosman, the creative director at Barneys New York. Star bring glamorous doesn't necessarily make you fashionable. What makes Audrey Hepburn's character so memorable is that there's genius eccentricity and quirkiness to her style. For example, the little tiaras. The strips in her hair. That movie should really be mandatory viewing for every girl to watch! AP

HEPBURN. Her role in the 1961 film turned her into an instant role model for young women.

Disney expands 3D movies with 'Beauty,' IMAX deal

LOS ANGELES—Walt Disney release 2009 release, "Chicken Little," was its first digital 3D movie, expanding its upcoming movie slate recently with a 3D version of "Beauty and the Beast" and a deal to make 3D films with IMAX.

"CHICKEN LITTLE." The production outfit's first digital 3D feature.

Disney has begun rendering its 1991 Oscar-nominated "Beauty" for a big-screen debut in 2010, bringing Disney's 3D show for that year to 11 rides, Disney Studios President Mark Zoradi said at investors in Singapore.

Five-picture deal

The company also announced a five-picture deal with IMAX, starting with the 2009 release of Robert Zemeckis' "A Christmas Carol," starring Jim Carrey.

Hollywood studios began ramping up production of 3D films a year ago to show up theatrical attendance and prices, because tickets for those releases sell at a premium.

The coming bumper crop of those films may have trouble finding wide screens, however, because the global economic downturn has slowed plans by exhibitors to install digital 3D projection systems. Reuters

'Kakasa' returns on GMA-7

By Remy M. Umerez

"SAKASA KA BA SA GRADE 5?," THE QUIZ show based on the popular US TV program, "Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader?," returned for its second season last Nov. 15 on GMA-7. It features a new set of gifted grade 5 students from different schools—all of them carefully screened to qualify for the show.

They are Daniel Onello (Claret School of Quezon City), John Cyriel Cruz (Lourdes School of Mandaluyong), Matthew Kyle Orozco (Diliman Preparatory School), Gabrielle Nicole Lutin (Lagro Elementary School), Michael Bitao (Kamuning Escuela School of Mandaluyong), Pauline Allyson Abalos (University of the Philippines Integrated School), Louis Lasby (Claret School of Quezon City), Rizza Louise Del Mundo (Colegio de San Juan de Letran), Ambrosio Anne Perino (Colegio San Agustin) and Russel Emmanuel Gravela (Colegio San Agustin).

During the show's recent press launch, host Jiggs Gibbs was asked whether he would be willing to play in the celebrity portion of the show. He quickly replied: "Let me think about it(pause, hinggang first question) after lang! Joke!" For better or for worse, which I enjoy, because I'm learning a lot."

"Kakasa Ka Ba Sa Grade 5?" is a version for professionals, 24 years and older, who will be asked questions lifted from textbooks used by first to fifth grade students. It's a convenient title, he must face the camera and promise to tell the world that—he's not smarter than a fifth grade student!

GIBBS with Season Two's gifted kids.

SATURDAY Special

Celebrity blogs let stars speak for themselves

LOS ANGELES—IN THE FAST-paced world of celebrity news, stars are increasingly turning to their own websites and blog postings to talk about themselves in a do-it-yourself approach to managing their public images. By speaking directly to fans on the Internet, stars have CELEBRITY P.

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While at the mall, pick up a new outfit for yourself. With all the holiday parties, a new dress will surely come in handy.

After spending the day roaming through the stores, sit back, relax and enjoy the Magical Sounds of Christmas. The UP Singing Ambassadors and a number of local choirs will visit various SM malls to serenade the crowd with Christmas carols.

Then, visit the SM Foodcourt and grab a snack. It's the perfect way to re-energize yourself for another round of shopping!

Christmas is definitely magical at SM Supermalls this year.

Happy holidays and happy malling!

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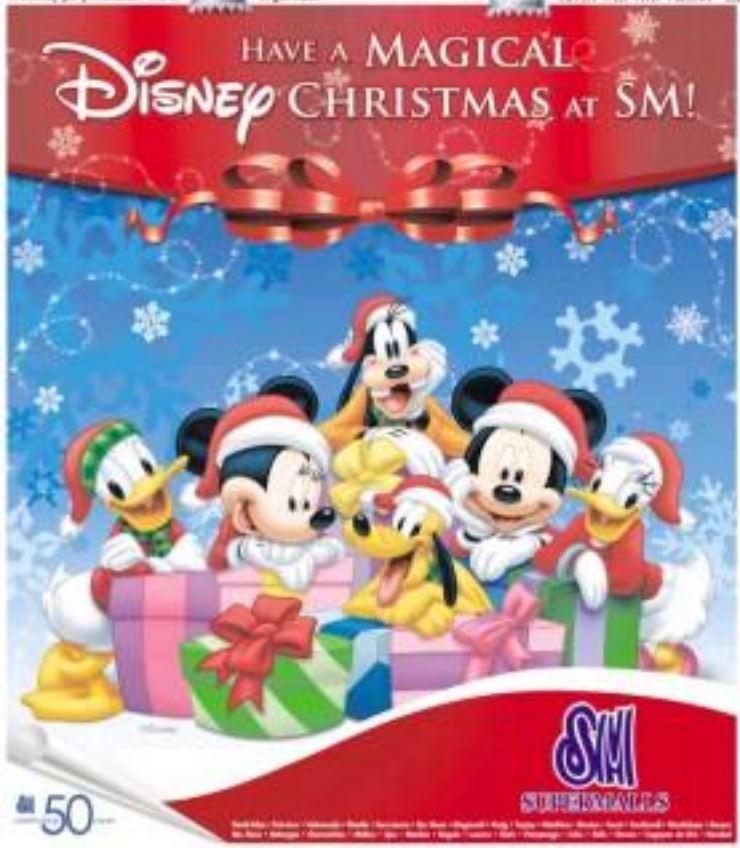

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Dec. 22, The Block, 4PM
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Heavenly Voices by Montserrat Boys Choir
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2 TWILIGHT
3 indieSine: ACTIVE VISTA
4 BOLT
5 BOLT
6 TWILIGHT
7 JAMES BOND: QUANTUM of SOLACE
8 [illegible]
9 ONE TRUE LOVE
10 SCAREGIVERS

ERMITA

1 TWILIGHT
2 ONE TRUE LOVE
3 TWILIGHT
4 TWILIGHT
5 BOLT
6 SCAREGIVERS
7 ERASERHEADS: REUNION CONCERT
8 PASSENGERS / SEX DRIVE
9 JAMES BOND: QUANTUM of SOLACE

METRO EAST

1 BOLT
2 TWILIGHT
3 BOLT
4 TWILIGHT
5 ERASERHEADS: REUNION CONCERT
6 JAMES BOND: QUANTUM of SOLACE
7 ONE TRUE LOVE
8 SCAREGIVERS

NOVALICHES

1 TWILIGHT
2 ONE TRUE LOVE
3 BOLT
4 SCAREGIVERS

PIONEER

1 BOLT
2 TWILIGHT
3 TWILIGHT
4 ONE TRUE LOVE

STA. ROSA

1 TWILIGHT
2 BOLT
3 SCAREGIVERS
4 ONE TRUE LOVE

LIPA

1 TWILIGHT
2 SCAREGIVERS
3 ONE TRUE LOVE
4 BOLT

DASMARINAS

1 BOLT
2 TWILIGHT
3 SCAREGIVERS
4 ONE TRUE LOVE

IMUS

1 ONE TRUE LOVE
2 BOLT
3 TWILIGHT
4 SCAREGIVERS

ANGELES

1 TWILIGHT
2 ONE TRUE LOVE
3 SCAREGIVERS
4 BOLT

STARMILLS

1 BOLT
2 ONE TRUE LOVE
3 BURN AFTER READING
4 SCAREGIVERS
5 TWILIGHT
6 JAMES BOND: QUANTUM of SOLACE

BACOLOD

1 TWILIGHT
2 SCAREGIVERS
3 BOLT
4 LIVING HELL
5 ONE TRUE LOVE
6 ERASERHEADS: REUNION CONCERT

ILOILO

1 TWILIGHT
2 ONE TRUE LOVE
3 SCAREGIVERS
4 BOLT
5 LIVING HELL
6 ERASERHEADS: REUNION CONCERT

Celebrity blogs let stars speak . . .

Pumapunta D1

spiraled the age-old approach to managing a scandal, which is to have a publicist speak for them.

"You want to have constant dialogue with your fans, you can't hire do a news flash every three months and expect people to understand what you're doing," stated Tyler Goldman, chief executive of Buzzart, a network of websites and celebrity blogs that recently signed on Media Rights.

When Lindsay Lohan was pulled with three thin stunts outside a Paris club for wearing fur, her friend, Isacsaffia Bonora, a celebrity DJ, responded with a widely reported blog post slamming the animal rights activist who threw the fuss. Reality star Lauren Conrad, of the television show, "The Hills," also used her blog to dispute a newspaper story that she threw a fit at a New York eatery.

LOHAN and BONORA. Online cheerleaders for their blogs as

Networking tool

Those stars made their statements on the trusted networking site, MySpace, which is one of several spots that stars are to clean up support from fans. Some stars also make public statements on their Facebook page, another social networking tool.

In these times, it can have profits just like millions of other Net users. But, unlike many lesser known mortals, what stars say on their page can instantly be picked up by news organizations, a development some celebrities have welcomed.

Hotel heiress and film and TV actress, Paris Hilton, 27, whose favorite catchphrase is "That's hot," said she uses her MySpace page to "communicate with fans. "Normally, I've tried to stay far away from what's in the press, and so, fans always check the blog when they read something negative," Hilton said in a statement. "I respond to them, not to gossip sources," she quipped.

Hilton is among numerous celebrities and celebrity and content for MySpace. "And, if there you'd something on the Internet, they don't have to wait until the next evening and go through their publicist, they can put something on their blog and know that the rest goes out immediately," Allgood added.

Fresh material

The number of interactions with MySpace pages has grown from 300 to fourteen to nearly 600 today, Buzzart, in addition to running its own website, also helps Britney Spears and Kim Kardashian upload fresh material to their websites. Buzzart can also receive a share of the advertising revenue that Buzzart generates, giving them up to a seven-figure annual salary from the company.

Goldman pointed to Kardashian, 28, of the reality TV show, "Keeping Up with the Kardashians," as a master of using the Internet, saying her site integrates content from others that don't always describe her in glowing terms.

"You can't put rumors around what you used to talk about. So, Kim would put photos that were out, until inauthenticity right away," Goldman observed. "If it's not authentic, they're going to go somewhere else!"

Reuters

Mikhail Red is following in his father's footsteps

RED. Tarlac memories.

By Rica Arevalo

AT THE RECENT 2008 GAWAD CCP Awards for Alternative Film and Video, Mikhail Bautista Red won two first prize awards in the Experimental ("The Tomboloi") and Short Feature ("Sinners") categories. His proud father, Cannes winner Raymond Red, texted us about his kid's twin victory.

Language of cinema

We note Mik, who will turn 17 in December, grew up. The young director shares: "I was not forced into filmmaking by my father. He always kept to himself with his work. However, as I child, I used to watch a lot of films on laser disc with him. I grew up appreciating the language of cinema."

Raymond agrees: "Filmmaking really runs in the blood, becomes both of my sons' obsession and an outcome in the visual arts at an early age. They fiddled around with our video camera and learned to operate the PC. It was almost intuitive for them!"

Mik's first video was a school project for Grade 6 when he was 12 years old. He shares: "I was happy when I got a good grade for the project. From then on, I submitted every project using video because it was fun and easy to make, and students preferred it over just plain reporting." He has since done music videos, documentaries and experimental short features.

His winning entries are products of a summer workshop at the Marilou Diaz-Abaya Film Institute. "Rainers" stars Lav Diaz and Hermes Bolilan. The short film shares how a runners can connect to the next generation.

"The Tomboloi" has Kho Shidy (director Shark and cinematographer Lee Shidy's son) and Hassan Hicolas Jr. as actors. It follows an adventurers as he endures his dark journey.

Mentor

Mik regards his father as his mentor. Raymond explains: "He is both my greatest ally and fiercest rival. He's always there to challenge me. I learn a lot from him sharing our conversations while we're caught in traffic. He usually doesn't attend my shoots, but he's first to criticize my work!"

What advice does Raymond have for his son? "I always tell him that the art of filmmaking is no something that I can teach him. What I can do is point him in the right direction, so that he can teach himself and go on his own journey of self-discovery. The playing field has changed a lot since the early years of the independent and alternative film movement in the '90s, in which I belong. Ultimately, the true artists will stand out and rise above the rest."

Mik hopes: "For now, I deliberately follow his footsteps and often tag along with him wherever he goes. By doing so, I learn a lot from him. But, I know that I will eventually have to 'slay' the father figure!"

SATURDAY Special

NOW SHOWING

Love at first bite

HARDWICKE'S vampire fable tackles teenage repression, abstinence and the importance of family

By Rito P. Asilo

"Twilight"
Dir Catherine Hardwicke
K. Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson

WHEN YOU CAN LIVE FOREVER, WHAT do you live for? Isabella Swan (Kristen Stewart) and Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson) discover the answer when their paths cross in Washington State's Forks High School. But, the star-crossed lovers-at the heart of "Twilight," director Catherine Hardwicke's highly anticipated adaptation of Stephenie Meyer's best-selling supernatural romance-have not lost your usual pimple high school jitters:

Seventeen-year-old Bella is wise beyond her age. She has just moved from sunny Phoenix, Arizona, some 2,000 kilometers away to live with her father, police chief Charlie (Billy Burke), in the rainy northwest so give her newly remarried mom some space.

In her school, Bella is welcomed by Jessica Stanley's (Anna Kendrick) teenage hallmates with open arms—except the gorgeous but aloof Edward and his equally mysterious "siblings," Alice, Emmett, Jasper and Rosalie, who keep to themselves. But, Meyer's attractive protagonists are destined to meet.

Penetrating glances

Sparks don't necessarily fly when Bella comes face to face with Edward for the first time. However, the disturbingly penetrating glances she later throws her way pique the petty jealousy students's curiosity—and ego—especially after they find themselves seated beside each other in biology class, and Edward rushes out of the room, seemingly repulsed by the way Bella smells! What a way to make a great first impression, right?

After Edward saves her from street thugs and a runaway truck, Bella realizes there's more to the "teenage" quintet than their pale, good looks and eerie "vegetarian" diet: They're vampires, and dashing Edward is actually—IT going on 100 in no time; romance blooms between the unlikely couple. Unfortunately, fate rarely bestows happy endings on forbidden love stories like theirs.

But, the band has a way of defying seemingly insurmountable odds, and Bella soon finds herself backing in Edward's protective arms, especially after a trio of blood-sucking nomadic vampires—James (Cam Gigandet), Victoria (Rachelle Lefevre) and Laurent (Edi Gathegi)—comes crashing in, and their ravenous appetite for human blood and mischief threatens to expose the Cullens' real identity and wreak havoc on their peaceful coexistence with humans.

Worse, Bella's irresistible scent "inspires" James to initiate a game of predator and prey, in which Edward's susceptible girlfriend is the succulent prize. But, see if Edward can help it!

Can the love between a human and a vampire transcend their physiological differences—and dietary requirements? Ask Anne Rice.

Mythology

Lush photography, a dreamy backdrop, an irresistible story about forbidden love and a talented cast that's easy on the eyes make Hardwicke's faithful screen adaptation of Meyer's vampire mythology accessible to viewers of all types and ages. She dismisses the story's metaphorical undercurrent without overtly crystallizing its themes and moral about teenage repression, abstinence and the importance of family.

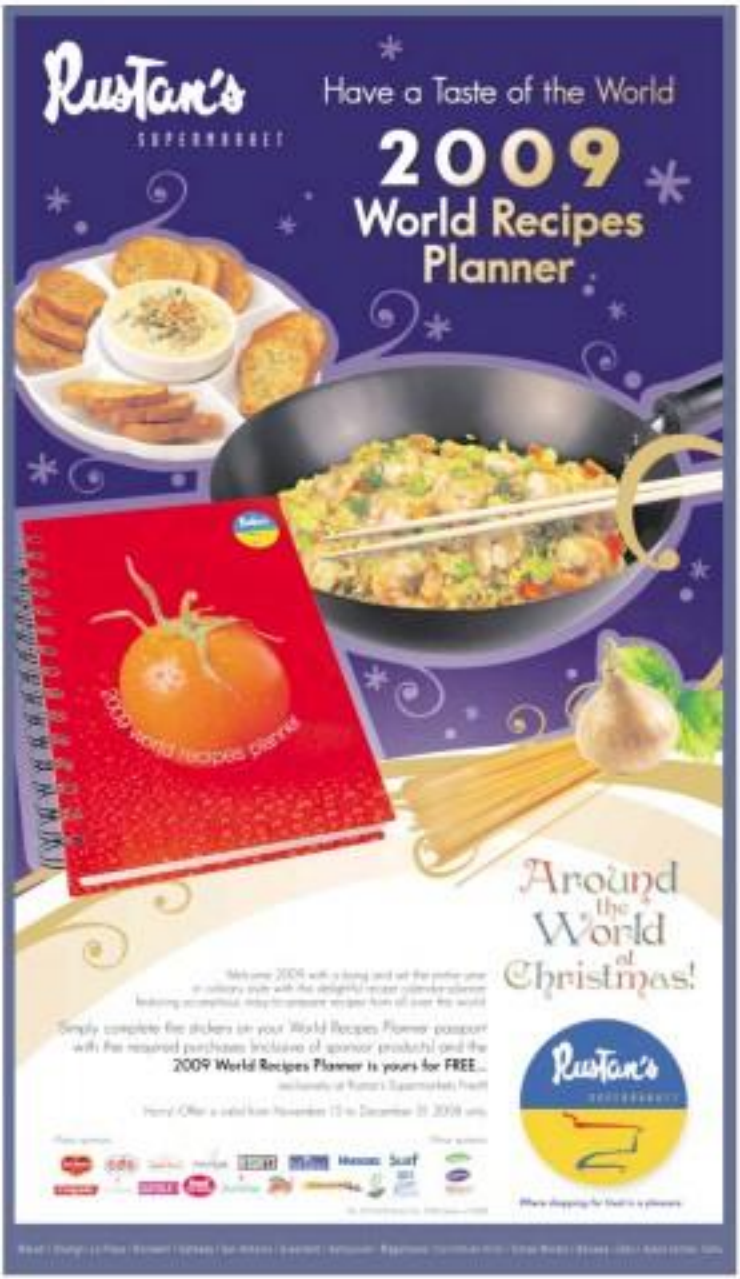
The appearance of the good-looking baddies, who unlike the skinny runway models before a fill, look more like a seduction device to review a story that loses much of its tension when the Cupidets and Mixmasters of this fictional world find a resolution to their wards' romantic dilemma.

STEWART AND PATTINSON. Star-crossed lovers in supernatural romance.

But, it's easy to disregard the elements of its premise because of the empathetic performances and sizzling screen chemistry of Stewart and Pattinson, who each show worthy-their familiar roles.

If you're the romantic sort, the swooning grandson of "Twilight's" love story will drive you in—as it did the bevy of swooning and sighing female viewers behind us. When Edward is left without a choice but to take his first bite, one of them gasped happily: "Bite me!" Who knew vampires could be so trashy?

But, valiant cynical female...teenage or otherwise—isn't moved when the Cullens' troubled guardian, Carlisle (Peter Facinelli, E.), reminds the stubborn Rosalie: "We have to protect Bella—she's now family!" Aww, shucks. There goes the box office.



Sundance opens with Australian claymation feature

"HARE AND HUMAN": Premise of a global thaw between two dysfunctional people.

LOS ANGELES—THE SUNDANCE FILM Festival, the top destination for US independent filmmakers, recently unveiled the opening night movie for its 25th edition in January, the clay animation feature, "Mary and Max."

Platform

In keeping with Sundance's tradition of providing a platform to different tales, "Mary and Max" tells the story of an 8-year-old australian girl who becomes the pen pal of an obese, 44-year-old man living in New York. Written and directed by Australian filmmaker Adam Elliot, the film spans 20 years as the two delve into subjects that include psychiatry, autism, loneliness, depression and agoraphobia. It features the voices of Toni Collette, Barry Humphries and Eric Bana.

Sundance director Geoffrey Gilmore, called it a "portrait of a global friendship between two marvelously dysfunctional people."

Sundance, sponsored by Robert Redford's filmmakers' institute, draws top stars, hordes of media and studio executives, and thousands of moviegoers to Park City, Utah.

Next year's event runs from Jan. 21 to 28. Entries hope to capitalize on their Sundance buzz to generate media attention and box-office sales. Films in the dramatic and documentary competitions, as well as select movies in the event, will be screened on Dec. 3.

Reuters

Italy fetes Fellini's 'La Dolce Vita'

ROME, ITALY—FEDERICO FELLINI'S classic film, "La Dolce Vita" is appreciating the half-century mark, and the director's hometown is pulling out the stops to give it a Felliniesque five-year-long international birthday bash.

The celebrations for the film, which Fellini conceived in 1958, shot in 1959 and premiered in 1960, will extend to Los Angeles in 2009 in a Hollywood-style red carpet to the actor who liked to say, "Why are two words when 15 will do?"

At part of the 50th anniversary festivities, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which awards the Oscars, will hold an exhibition from Jan. 24 to Apr. 19 on Fellini's "Book of My Dreams" in Beverly Hills.

Speeches

But Fellini kicked off the party recently with an international convention on "La Dolce Vita." It included speeches by critics, a sociologist, a psychoanalyst, a composer, an etymologist and a priest. For two days, they discussed, dissected and debated every aspect of the 170-minute long, black-and-white film that changed cinema forever.

Fellini, who died in Rome in 1993, is a god among film buffs, and "La Dolce Vita" is an icon. So, it was no surprise that for some, the convention was akin to a religious experience, and a chance to rekindle a relic.

"Our role is to conserve and transmit the historical memory of Federico Fellini," Michele Bonetti, director of the foundation that bears the late director's name, said reverently.

The foundation holds seminars and exhibitions, publishes books and releases a quarterly review of "Fellinian Studies," which before its first issue topics as the significance of music and the sea in Fellini's representations.

"Fellini was an artist whose influence, cultural and intellectual power went far beyond cinema. His drawings, drawings, writings, and the music he chose have left a deep and broad art and society," added Bonetti.

Divorcees

Last week, the foundation opened the exhibition, "The Books of My Dreams," where devotees can see the volumes he kept at times that influenced him—from comic books and newspaper reports to the significance of music and the sea in Fellini's representations.

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"La Dolce Vita," starring Marcello Mastroianni, Anita Ekberg and Anouk Aimee, was considered scandalous at the time of its release, but is quite tame by the standards of today, when most flicks can be seen in a television deodorant advertisement.

In seven loosely connected episodes, Mastroianni, playing reporter Marcello, covers the escapades of redefined nobility, treasure-hobe, starlets and hangovers of the rich set on Rome's Via Veneto, as he struggles to find meaning in his own life.

A bored, rich woman (Anouk Aimee) takes Marcello in her Cadillac to the squalid haunts of a prostitute, because nothing less there would be more exciting than doing it to her pretend ex-sex.

In its emblematic scene, Sylvia, a towering playboy-servant blonde (then played by Ekberg, Anita Marcello into a seaside midnight waste to the cold waters of Rome's Trevi fountain.

Inseparable sidekick

In the film, Marcello encounters eccentric with his inseparable sidekick, a photographer whose last name is Paparazzo. The name is now in dictionaries in nearly every language, meaning aggressive street photographers.

"The phrase, 'Dolce Vita' or 'the sweet life,' and the word paparazzo have become part of everyday American language," observed Elisa Harrington of the Academy of Motion Picture arts and Sciences in California. "The film instantly relate us to it with the celebrity culture in America. The paparazzi are everywhere, stars are small children know the name, because our lives in LA are engaged by the existence of these characters," she continued.

MASTROIANNI AND EKBERG: Subtitled movie 'Reminders's 1959 classic.

Legendary photographer

Fellini based the role of Paparazzo on the real-life artist of Tazio Secchiaroli, a legendary photographer who died in 1998. Without explanation for why Fellini chose the surname Paparazzo exist. One is because in the syllable—ass—(bottom with "razzo," the vulgar Italian slang word for penis.

When the film came out, the Vatican said it should be entitled "The Disgusting Life," and on new elderly woman even grabbed Fellini in Rome and told him to "try a woman around your neck and down to the deepest sea."

The controversy only helped raise its peculiar inside Italy. "La Dolce Vita" went on to influence many directors and still leaves its mark on the newspaper-stories. "My students today say it has a moral message," mused teacher Luisa Rinna, taking her high school class to the conventions. "They identify the false values, superficiality and aspirations of the film's characters with the society they live in today."

Reuters

The secret Jeff Chandler kept in his closet

By Bobo Cormanes

IN THE 1950s, JEFF CHANDLER WAS A respected Universal Studio contract star who was often cast as a principled macho in cowboy films. It still and fanned frank from Brooklyn, he had curly, prematurely silver hair. He appealed to women because he starred in many-wrestled adventure films.

Chandler broke out of his cowboy-radio-sounds-to-be late "40s in roles like gruesome yet tough but principled cowboys, or an Indian chief named Geronimo—a role he played thrice. He was nominated for an Oscar when he first escaped the latter role in "Broken Arrow," co-starring James Stewart and Debra Paget.

Chandler likewise appeared in suspense caper like "Threat in the Forest," "The Story of David" and "Sign of the Pagan."

Compelling looks

His compelling looks made him an ideal leading man in romances like "The Lady Takes a Flyer," "Women on the Bench," "Stranger in My Arms" and "Female Eagles," in which he starred alongside Lana Turner, Joan Crawford, Jane Allyson, Sandra Dee, Susan Hayward and Kim Novak. He costarred with Esther Williams in "Raw Wind in Eden." Indeed, Chandler was considered an important leading man in Hollywood.

In those days, the Hollywoodites was a hotbed. Actors lived by Hollywood Rule that required wild carousing and tropical foliage or approximately three hours of Brazilian sun. Marriages were made and broken with the speed of a Hollywood Boulevard traffic jam.

CHANDLER. Stars "Merrill's Marauders" in Manila.

Plus, it was facilitated to shoot here, and the local crew members spoke English. Thus, George Montgomery followed the footsteps of Tyrone Power and came to shoot movies here.

When Chandler was cast in the war epic, "Merrill's Marauders," there was great excitement in Manila. He came here with Tyrone Power's ex-wife Sam Fuller. They were primarily in the tragic disintimacy of Lucilla and Penelope Dogar Mills. Fuller had written and directed criminal westerns like "I Shot Jesse James," "Street Behind" and "Pickup on 42nd Street."

Supporting role

Pancho Magsaysay was cast in a supporting role in "Merrill's Marauders," but he opted to use the screen name, Enrique Magsaysay. A., because his local name, Pancho, was deemed comic to Southerners. Effie Lai Yiddal was cast as a Burmese native who was married to safety by the mountain Hamilla.

However, Chandler was reclusive. He hardly socialized while shooting here—unlike Power, who was wined and dined by Manila's 400. Chandler quietly returned to Hollywood after the movie was finished.

At age 42, he died from blood poisoning following a surgical procedure. Media-reporter was heard of when Chandler's ex-al Esther Williams published her biography, "Million Dollar Mermaid," in which she revealed that her 6'5" macho lover of three years was a closet cross-dresser.

Michael J. Fox sees irony in playing paralyzed man

FOX. "I have my life to observe different viewers."

LOS ANGELES—MICHAEL J. Fox, misdiagnosed from those business due to Parkinson's Disease, said it was ironic that his latest television role was playing a paralyzed man in a wheelchair.

Fox, 47, will appear in four episodes of the firefighting drama, "Rescue Me," next year—his first primetime TV role since 2000.

"The funny part is not playing a paralyzed guy because I'm the opposite of paralyzed. It's tricky, just to mess her still," Fox told Ellen Seymour on Tonight. Fox, best known for starring in the "Back to the Future" movies in the 1980s, bowed out of full-time acting in 2000. He said he wanted to spend his time trying to find a cure for Parkinson's Disease, a disorder of the central nervous system that is characterized by tremors.

Fox said he was feeling "pretty good, all things considered." "If you've never down, you'll never know how good it feels to be up. It's a great ride, and I wouldn't change a thing! I love my life for whatever difficulties there are," he added. Reuters

Character

He described his character in "Rescue Me" as "really dark and extraordinarily funny. It's bitter and nasty. It's really fun," the actor stated.

In reality, Fox said his outlook was anything but bitter, cynical or lost hope. He is willing to look about optimistic and hopeful called "Always Looking Up—The Adventures of an Incurable Optimist," which is due to come out next year.

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	3 MADAGASCAR 2 / QUANTUM OF SOLACE	4 BOLT	5 SLUMDOGGERS				
TRINOMA	1 ONE TRUE LOVE	2 BOLT	3 MADAGASCAR 2 / QUANTUM OF SOLACE	4 SHANGHAI KID: THE ADJACK CONNERY			
	5 TWILIGHT	6 TWILIGHT	7? TWILIGHT				

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

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Alabang Town Center — CHRISTMAS WONDERSHOP — November 28 | Activity Center, 4pm

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Market! Market! — CELEBRITY RECIPES SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY SHOW — November 29 | Activity Center

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Show biz Speak, 101

By Nestor U. Torre

PEOPLE WHO WANT TO MAKE IT IN show business quickly discover that they've stepped into an alternate, albeit parallel universe, where different priorities, traditions and values hold sway.

Take the matter of language. In the real world, some words' meanings are different from when they mean in the entertainment universe. So, if you want to survive and even thrive in the biz, you've got to get key on biz speak.

Some people think that show biz speak is similar to beauticians or gaygoys. Well, up to a point, that's true—but, it's far from the whole story.

Incorrect perception

Take the seemingly simple and forthright word, *misunderstanding*. In the real world, it denotes a difference of opinion resulting from an incorrect perception of the terms involved in an arrangement or relationship.

In the *real* world, however, misunderstanding can be made in reference to all sorts of things, depending on the extent of the need to indulge or cover up/down.

When two shows his classmates have a disagreement, or get into an argument or an all-out brawl, they cover up the violent reaction or views involved by saying that they simply had a "misunderstanding."

But in showbiz, since nothing was misunderstood. The contestants knew full well what they were doing, they simply had a vicious fight.

But, victimization has no place in the show biz world, since it's supposed to be about beauty and glamour, so everything nasty is blithely swept under the rug and smoothly described as a mere "misunderstanding."

Context

Another term given a different meaning when used in the show biz context is "we're just friends." This cover up/evasion has been a relieved so often by show biz couples that it's practically become an industry matter.

Stars and starlets to love or in love say they're "just friends" even when they're caught snuggling up a storm or sleeping over to each other's pads.

The ultimate spectacle is the sight of lovers already expecting a baby and still resolutely declaring, "We're really just friends." —Bebe Tinsuley "can you just?

And, quite often, a couple breaks up without ever admitting that they were more than "just friends" in the first place!

Why do they do it? Some stars say that such declarations of love are premature, because other insiders first have to be "sounded" before being admitted in. Then, too, some celebrities play the field, and don't like being "limited" by a forthright declaration of romantic commitment.

Other terms with "new" meanings in the entertainment world: "Radiation"—used to describe most show biz gaudy reports on TV. Trouble is, after watching the item on one channel, when viewers switch to another TV station, the same gossip report is aired. —So much for "exclusive"!

Predictable

"Magsasabog magsasabog ang mga mata, pero in ng-end? Pine, but when you watch the actual film, it's so predictable and unsophisticated as many other productions. —So much for "assignments"

Then there's "Unpwin Ahang Indi sa nanood na pelikula ko," the audacious **musician** uttered by some producers and directors to get star-struck newcomers to do everything they want. And, to share his meaning? Why, absolutely nothing at all!

Suri Cruise tops Forbes list of 'Hottest Tots'

NEW YORK—SURI CRUISE IS THE most popular kid on the playground. The 2-year-old daughter of Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes tops Forbes.com's second annual list of "Hollywood's 18 Hottest Tots."

Forbes.com, which ranked celebrity children 5 years old and younger based on media attention and their parents' popularity, said Suri—known for her stylish outfits and haircut—popped up in more news articles and blogs than her peers.

A-list parents

Three of Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt's six children made the list: Shiloh Jolie-Pitt, 2, is in second place after scoring in first last year; Zahara Jolie-Pitt, 3, is in third place; and Pax Jolie-Pitt, 4, is fourth on the list. "Though not quite the tabloid stars his sisters, Zahara and Shiloh, are, his recognizable song and A-list parents give him spots in the top five," said Forbes.com of Pax.

Rounding out the top 10 list: Sam Alexis Woods, daughter of Tiger Woods and his wife, Elin; Cruz Beckham, son of David and Victoria Beckham; Matilda Rose Ledger, daughter of Michelle Williams and Heath Ledger; David Banda, son of Madonna and Guy Ritchie; Jones Peterson Federline, son of Britney Spears and Kevin Federline, and Sam Sheen, daughter of Denise Richards and Charlie Sheen.

Forbes.com looked at a year's worth of press clippings and Internet presence for more than 50 Hollywood kids. The website then narrowed the list, recruiting the polling firm, E-Poll Market Research, to get newspaper scores for the children and consumer appeal rankings for their celebrity parents. AP

Disney's canine hero is a winsome winner

By Nestani Tarce

LIKE THE MOVIE'S TITLE CHARACTER, Disney's newest animated feature, "Bolt," is charming, fast and easy to like.

Ever since Disney's animated features declared it's go down the CGI road, the big, stodgy studio hasn't entirely been able to match the success of Pixar or DreamWorks. With "Bolt," however, it has finally come up with a winner, and it could be a sign of better times ahead. If you're ever out through "Chicken Little," you doubtless understand why this is such a welcome breakthrough.

Right balance

The movie tells the story of a dog who stars in his own TV show and doesn't even know it. Bolt is a whole shepherd whose life, as he understands it, revolves around saving the life of his person, Penny. When Bolt doesn't know is that Penny is never really in any danger from the supervillain any time, and his world is just a film set.

Then, a series of accidents sends the dedicated canine from Hollywood to New York. It's a shipping box, and when he bursts out—still thinking that he has to save Penny from the bad guys—he finds out that everything he has always believed turns out to be untrue.

It all sounds very "Truman Show," and it's pretty deep for a Disney movie—but the film manages to strike the right balance between action thrills and the worst human. Unlike some of its predecessors at Disney, it has a genuine, sympathetic feel, and its makers have schemed something that is true to old Walt's spirit than most everything that the company has produced in recent years.

"Bolt" opens with a cleverly choreographed, action-heavy chase scene that's more exciting than anything in a live action movie, and it doesn't lose its momentum from the get-go. Its pace never falters, even when the action slows down for the production's quieter moments.

While it doesn't have the richness or artistry of Pixar's best ones, it is nevertheless fun, disarming, and it has real heart. While most animated features these days feel like a 90-minute stream of gimmicks, the film takes its cue from Pixar and just concentrates on telling a good story.

Interesting sidekicks

Bolt's quest to get back home stays heavily on his original pilot, and we all know it's bound to have a happy ending—but, being with the cocky protagonist on his journey is fun, and you'll get more than a few laughs in the process.

Voiced earnestly by John Travolta, Bolt is a genuinely likable character who, while a bit bland, has enough interesting sidekicks in the form of Rhino, a cranked Steve Buscemi-alley cat, and Mittens, a feisty-in a plastic exercise ball who is the quintessential fan.

Mittens is voiced with the right mix of feistiness and false humor by Susie Essman (from "Curb Your Enthusiasm"), and Mark Walton, as the voice of Rhino, gets the geeky hero-worship-strains of a fan-boy down pat.

Apart from Travolta and Miley Cyrus (as the voice of Penny), there are no big stars doing voice-work here. But, it's no great loss in terms of quality; since voice actors are usually better than many Hollywood stars, anyway, it looks like the budget that would have gone to high-priced box box, instead, gone into making the animation shine and zippy.

For a more enhanced visual experience, you can also watch "Bolt" in digital 3D at select cinemas.

Variety shows could bring back spice to TV life

LOS ANGELES—TIPPER top US comedian will bring variety shows to television next week and Ponte O'Donnell believes the format could stage a comeback amid the slumping economy, if fans flee their gathering around TV sets for cheap entertainment.

Specials from O'Donnell, Ellen DeGeneres and Stephen Colbert are scheduled in one-time events, but if successful, they highlight what could be a return to a program format largely absent from TV for more than 20 years.

"Back Live" features Broadway-style singing and dancing from stars such as Gloria Estefan and Harry Connick Jr. O'Donnell and NBC, which aired the show last Dec. 26, said it could return as a recurring program.

"The timing is right...the economy has made it so people are starting home more often and are really unable to go out," remarked O'Donnell. 46. "This is how to get around the TV table everyone in your family and laugh—that, to me, is when a needed asset."

DEGENERES. Performers with pole dancers and magicians in TV special

Pole-dancing bears

She fact part, DeGeneres will share the stage w/ "Ellen's Even Bigger Totally Big Show" today with celebrities from talent pole-dancing bears, a Dandy magician, and performers from Spain, Germany and other countries.

DeGeneres, 50, who already has a daytime talk show, described herself as a fan of old-time variety shows. "It's something that I've always loved," she told Reuters. "When I was growing up, it's the kind of thing that I watched all the time, and I wanted to bring it back."

"A Colbert Christmas," which leads on Comedy Central, takes a satirical approach to typical Christmas TV specials, with comedy sketches and singers like country star Willie Nelson, and rocker Elvis Costello.

Continuing musical acts and sketch comedy until midnight, anything goes format, variety programs such as "The Carol Burnett Show" and "The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour" were a staple of nighttime US TV in the 1960s and 1970s. But, they fell out of favor in the 1980s, as TV channels proliferated, and audiences drifted to diverse tech rewards.

Variety programs remain popular in many parts of the world, from "Idol Malaysia" to the Philippines's "Sabado Di-gasal" in Latin America. But, variety programs are considered to reality TV. The popular "Saturday Night Live," which was launched in the 1970s, retains vestiges of old-time variety.

Different time

Larry Auerbach, who had worked as resident agent for "I" years and is associate dean at the school of cinematic arts at the University of Southern California, said he'd like to see the variety show return, but he doubt if it will happen. "Maybe, it might come back someday, but it's a different time today" Auerbach shrugged. "People, if they're old enough to remember anything, will consider it old-hat, I guess."

But, Craig Hecht, NBC executive vice president of alternative programming, said his network's "America's Got Talent," which combines reality TV and the variety format, has proven popular. He explained: "Our program is just another extension of the pure variety show."

Michael Wright, an executive at Turner Broadcasting, the parent company of TBS, said DeGeneres' special will show that variety can elevate find audiences on TV "if done correctly. I can't see obstacles to it working, other than the need for talented people to execute it well," he reasoned. Reuters

Hollywood producers juggle many roles

LOS ANGELES—WHAT EXACTLY does a producer do? Besides supervising the production schedule. And hiring and firing talent. And managing the financing and budget. In short like-unto everything.

Heading into the awards season, six producers of some of the year's most ambitious films—Steve Graves ("Changeling," "Final Vision"), Dan Jinks ("908," Michael Londoo ("The Visitor," "MIA"); Bob Loewen ("Changeling," "Gran Torino"), Frank Marshall ("The Curious Case of Benjamin Button") and Matt Platt ("Started Getting Married")—discussed their production, making good movies in a bad economy—and the different jobs they do. Excerpts:

What is it in a project that says to you, 'Fill right, this is a movie'?

Bob Loewen: A story that stays with me after I put it down. Twenty maybe. I don't delve too much beyond that.

Michael London: For me, it's usually a character that I can engage with—and the voice of the writer. Once or twice a year, at the end of 90 minutes or two hours of reading, I just feel it.

Brian Grazer: It's the case of "Frost/Nixon." I read the play, and I had no idea if it would be a movie. I just knew that I liked it and thought it was smart. More often than not, it's whether some world or subculture experience me. If it does, then I dig inside and, later, it gets determined if it will be a movie.

Process

How involved are you in that "digging" process?

Grazer: I don't just say "Go, write that!" Digging is the part that's personally fun. I like to be involved and meet interesting people. Attorneys, medicine, politics, religion, and people who are experts in fields outside my own. They help inform my sensibility. But, I get very involved because it's time-efficient. The more involved I am at the beginning in understanding the subject or the dynamics of the characters, the less re-studies I have to read.

GRAZER: "I like to be involved and meet interesting people. They inform my sensibility."

How much does each person count for a successful producing career or is it the ability to get things done?

Frank Marshall: It's a little of both. Making movies is hard. You have to be passionate about it. What am I going to be passionate about 24/7? Is it a story I want to see on the screen?

How have those requirements changed in the past 10 years?

Grazer: The talent part of it—creating a foundation for the film—might be easier, because of the economics of the business, which have gotten worse. From my perspective, it has made more talented people available.

Brian: There's less money, the studios are more fiscal minded (about) by redesigning the backend or the front-end of their compensation, they're more aggressive. So, by testing that will down, it's easier to approach A-list directors and stars that I wouldn't have been able to approach 10 years ago. Or afford on a budget.

Everyone understands that he has to adapt to the new financial climate of the movie business. So, stars are willing to take less money to make something they care about. It has probably forced talent to look more toward subjects and themes that they care about, as opposed to personal compensation.

Projects that matter

London: Actors and directors are hungry to do film projects that matter to them, because most studio movies—not to say there aren't great studio movies—we're getting more and more constructed. A lot of them are not great, they're not about the acting.

Dr. "Bill," it was extraordinary. Once Gus Van Sant and Sean Penn were attached to the movie, we almost didn't have any negotiations.

Dan Jinks: There are talented executives at certain studios who want to do interesting movies. They don't want everything relegated to their independent division. If they still even have one. We have a project we're working on at Universal now. It's a movie that, sure, there's a $60-million version of it, but they don't want to spend that much money on it—and they shouldn't have to. They want it in this environment. We're trying to find studio movie at close to an independent-sized budget, and that's an interesting challenge. But, I think that's happening, because it's allowing studios to continue making interesting movies.

London: Brian, with "Frost/Nixon," which was made through the studio system, is it something like what Dan is talking about, or does the movie, because it's high-profile, wind up becoming a "full-send" production?

Grazer: No, Ron Howard did something that was an aberration, and that is in 32 days. Of course, Clint Eastwood shoots everything in 40 days! But, Ron is used to shooting movies in 80 days. He shot this one in 42 days and got paid very little. So did Frank Langella. Everybody did.

REUTERS

Projects that matter

London: Actors and directors are hungry to do film projects that matter to them, because most studio movies—not to say there aren't great studio movies—we're getting more and more constructed. A lot of them are not great, they're not about the acting.

On "Bill," it was extraordinary. Once Gus Van Sant and Sean Penn were attached to the movie, we almost didn't have any negotiations.

Dan Jinks: There are talented executives at certain studios who want to do interesting movies. They don't want everything relegated to their independent division. If they still even have one. We have a project we're working on at Universal now. It's a movie that, sure, there's a $60-million version of it, but they don't want to spend that much money on it—and they shouldn't have to. They want it in this environment. We're trying to find studio movie at close to an independent-sized budget, and that's an interesting challenge. But, I think that's happening, because it's allowing studios to continue making interesting movies.

London: Brian, with "Frost/Nixon," which was made through the studio system, is it something like what Dan is talking about, or does the movie, because it's high-profile, wind up becoming a "full-send" production?

Grazer: No, Ron Howard did something that was an aberration, and that is in 32 days. Of course, Clint Eastwood shoots everything in 40 days! But, Ron is used to shooting movies in 80 days. He shot this one in 42 days and got paid very little. So did Frank Langella. Everybody did.

REUTERS

THE MAGIC. Their songs deserve to be heard.

Music to my ears

By Babe Cervantes

I HAVE LONG COMPLAINED about the kind of music our airports play. If you were a tourist, you wouldn't think you were in the Philippines, because our airports play nothing but loud, foreign disco music. Libs, don't we have our own?

This is irritating, because their taste is downright bad. And, this gets even worse because of the noise coming from the TV set. As a result, stressed-out passengers have no choice but to talk above the din!

We have local ethnic music and the drumbeats to keep the foreign agitos, they can play a fusion of those with the so-called OPM (Original Philipino Music). The Department of Tourism has to be finalized, too, because their lack of concern for local Pinoy music has been a longstanding bad habit—and a flagrant insult to our talented composers!

Hospitality

For example, when foreigners and balikbayans arrive in the country, why can't a wonderful group (Isaac? Or, groups from public schools can take turns rendering our genres. We can even utilize the services of our many world-class musicians and choral groups. That way, our visitors will get an early taste of our renowned hospitality.

The Philippine Madrigal Singers have won the Olympics of choral singing twice. The UST Singers, the UP Concert Chorus, and the UP Singing Ambassadors are [illegible] decorated. We also have talented pop artists like Lea Salonga, Martin Nievera, Regie Alejandro and Tony Valcarcel.

And, yes, why can regional music, too? To enter the country as wings of song would be a memorable welcome, indeed!

Why then doesn't the DOT allocate a budget, so that local artisans and airports too provided the necessary CDs and DVDs of such music for the pleasure of their passengers?

Well, imagine my delight when I entered the Lima airport recently and heard distinct Peruvian music being played. Hearing it made me excited that I finally arrived there after a long flight from Los Angeles. Where I got on the plane for my flight to Cusco, the same kind of music was playing. It was music to my ears!

Other tourists

It obviously transported the cohort tourists from America, Germany, Israel, Norway, Sweden, China and Japan. It was a festive and cheerful scene. Idea of height when the tour guide called our names like Erickson, Hayakawa, Ruich and Abita. They looked up sing when Cervantes was called out...because surely do Filipinos visit Peru.

In fact, the immigration officer wasn't sure if I traveled a visa or not when I landed at the Chavez International Airport in Lima. Despite the insistence of a colleague, he asked two others to ensure that no illegal entry was taking place!

Ordinarily, it would have irked me or annoyed me not. But, surprisingly, I didn't mind the task, the doubt and the many ignorant questions. After all, I loved the Peruvian music being played in the background...and I could probably stand there forever just listening to it!

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CAPT. Ricardo Silgson (center) and his Air Force classmates

'Kiju'

STREET SMART

Mandy Naraneera

Then, while we were looking up, a brand-new silver Honda Civic with a large red ribbon made its way into the garage. Another gift! The story-end. In fact, who has received coupon and skin cancer, felt he had just won the jackpot.

* * *

Best On Dec. 15 deadline to get a promo run for our Amazing Bataan Photo Safari for March 13-16 and 27-30, and April 3-6. Only 8 seats in total. Photo and Dive inclusive. Call 899-1767, or email mandynaraneera@yahoo.com. Also, visit the LRI Plaza Soliday Suite until Dec. 4 at 210 Shaman Garcia st., Bel-Air II, Makati City.

THE BIRTHDAY boy and his four daughters.

Wolfgang returns with new album and concert

ARTHUR (SECOND FROM LEFT): "We don't follow trends."

By Marlet D. Salazar

IT HAD BEEN SIX YEARS SINCE THE release of "Black Mamba," considered to be one of Wolfgang's best albums. The group sampled a new song, "Deathspeed," at last year's concert. Inspired by fans' positive response, Basti Artadi and Mhimel Leguido went on to finish the new album's remaining songs—albeit on and off—since they both have "day jobs."

"My inspiration grew out of Manuel's music," Artadi shared. "He presented me with the music bed for what was to become 'Deathspeed.' After I heard it, it was full-speed ahead!"

Lyrics

Wolfgang's lyrics always give listeners something to think about. The songs in the new album, "Villains," are no exception, according to Artadi, who shares the spotlight with guitarist Leguido and bassist Mon Legaspi.

"This is the first Wolfgang album where you can hear the bass," he told us. "Mon is a fantastic player, and you can hear all the things he's doing! It's a shame that a lot of people haven't really heard him play because, in our previous albums, he was seldom to less to the mix."

Artadi feels that the latest album is the next logical step for the group after "Mamba." The group's distinct sound is still there, but it's more updated. The product of the trio's collaboration makes for something that sounds new but still familiar.

"You can expect a very good collection of new songs!" Leguido beamed. His role in making it happen is huge. "I got into this project with the intention of putting together a great album," he confessed. "My logic that 'Villains' does well enough is allow us to continue doing what we do best."

As much as possible, Wolfgang tries to stick to their music. "Hopefully, that works for us again this time around," Leguido added. "We have a sound that people can identify with, but we also take chances with our music—we don't follow trends."

In the concert, "Black Christmas Project," on Dec. 10 at Eastwood City Central Plaza, Libis, Wolfgang will be joined by another iconic band, "Razorback." Once again, Francis Aquino will play the drums. He said it was scary at first to work with his idols. He describes the experience as "metosis. I still get star-struck!" Wolfgang will also rock Cebu on Dec. 12.

Free will

LOTUS POND

R. Valencia and S. Bismark

WHY DID THE SUPREME Being create a material world full of suffering and misery? The writings of Srila Krishna Das clearly explain the issue:

"The living being is gifted with free will, which allows him to either serve God or not. Those who serve Him of their own volition remain in association with God in the spiritual world. **Many living beings are in this situation.** Those who choose to live for themselves leave the spiritual dimension to go to the material world, where they endeavor to find happiness independent from God.

Spiritual dimension

"The fact that the living entity exercises free will is very important. It renders the **Supreme Entity blameless.** If a drunken person finds himself in the gutter and curses the person who made it, he is unwilling reality. He doesn't recognize his responsibility for his lamentable situation. God can't be blamed for our worldly suffering.

"Some souls try to play God in the material world. They seek happiness in various ways. Since the soul is by nature the Supreme Being's **servant, he can't find actual** happiness as he pursues pleasures away from His service—because he can't act against his nature. Thus, no matter what he pursues, or accomplishes, he'll never be fully satisfied! Real pleasure is found in the spiritual dimension, not in the material world.

"Only ignorant people can declare that God is incapable of creating an abode of pure and unleavengred bliss, because they don't see beyond the material sphere. Without the proper perspective, they're unable to see its purpose.

"Out of kindness and concern for us, God **designed a world that doesn't merely cure** it attempted enjoyment—it likewise brings about rehabilitation. Ideally, a prison is really meant for reformation, not punishment.

"The world then is likened to a reform school. It is designed by God to allow living beings to pursue their quest for happiness, even without Him. But, simultaneously, it also helps them reform."

Boob-tube booboos

By Nestor U. Torre

NIGHT IN THE CONTROVERSY over sexy shots on TV and in the movies, what are some of the misdeeds that can guide our decisions?

Gonor: It's really difficult to decide, because there's always a thin line between pornographic and lewd.

(Ah, some again?)

***

Star: Congratulations on your award!

Gonor: Thank you very much.

Star: How do you feel about it? Is it so important for you?

Gonor: Of course. I don't expect awards, but it's only natural, do want you call me heroic the more you care with me?

(We should have stopped at "Thank you very much.")

***

Star: You're new to show biz, and yet you're already popular. What's your advantage over other young talents out there?

Gonor: Well, one thing, I really get well along with all the people.

(Do tell!)

***

Host: What are the attractions and activities on your beach resort?

Guest: Oh, so many—swimming, diving, banana boat, wakeboarding, tubing—

(For more snorkeling, are you sure?)

***

Host: Why did you get [name of starlet] to perform in your show?

Guest: Because he's an actor, dancer and singer all in one—so, versatility talaga.

(Baka versatile ang ibig nyong sabihin …)

***

Host: You have been with your boyfriend for how long now?

Guest: Four years.

Host: So there his, that's very long. What's your secret?

Guest: I just think, as for as a relationship, you just have to be, like, together

(Like, that's what being in a relationship means.)

***

Host: Are you in love with [name of starlet]?

Guest: No, no, we're just friends, really.

Host: But, you've seen together so often.

Guest: Yes, para kaming lovebirds and classic, para'ng reading romantic.

(—Thank goodness for that!)

Institution of marriage

Host: So you still believe in marriage?

Guest: Of course!

Host: But, the institution of marriage is less popular these days, with so many marriages breaking down.

Guest: Yes, for some, maybe—but, for me, I still believe in making love, pareho ang mental love.

(Kaya nga emoral, no?)

***

Host: Oh, we have no more time. Any goodbye already

Cohost: OK. From all of us out here, thank you for all watching. (Uh, you're welcome?)

***

Cohost: You nervous?

Host: Yes, cuz no, my show for today, first medyo short na tayo.

(As in, medically challenged?)

Wow Bata fest showcases kids' media works

MANILA, PHILIPPINES—Young Stars Program and GMA7TV have accomplished their run-up for the Least Affected Area campaign, a global crusade that aims to eradicate, if not eliminate, the incidence of violence, bullying and abuse in schools.

The strategy is to harness Young Stars children, mostly in Para-sectoral communities, to actively participate in the campaign through media production. Children are the affected subjects; hence, they make the child-witness accounts and directors.

Since April, KidsTV has been continuously running hundreds of kids, aged 9 to 17, in three venue positions, Manila, Dasmariñas Mindoro, Cebu and Southern Leyte. The children are being learned in digital photography, video and radio production and various aspects of media, with mentors like Ian Garchitorena, Meg Gonzalez, Mae Alfaraque and Rhonch Macalalad.

Different classes

Youth behavior, issues, and morals are darkly influenced by media. It therefore makes sense that these young minds are more likely become media literate and responsible producers. They have begun producing their own public service announcements and radio plugs. A few of them have started making short documentaries, using the theme, Learn Without Fear.

This week, nearly 150 kids were brought to Manila for the third Yellow Bata Festival. Finishedups in different classes related to media were conducted. Storytelling was headed by Bodjie Pascua, reporting and interviewing by Mel Mendiola and Angelique Lazo, acting by television by Mikee de Guzman, voice acting by Boy Sabordalan, creative conceptualization by Ishtil Cortes, scriptwriting by Bendicto Bagas, and animation, storyboarding and puppetry by Erick Gerosin, Jonas Diego and Carlo Magno, respectively.

Five children were named winners of KidsTV's Shining Brilliance award: Mary Sunshine Serrano, 11, of Masbate, and Annabelle Bautista, 17, of Camotes Island. The lasting Bodjiator competition is where the country winners can be chosen for the various international competitions and festivals that each video entries from children.

The Shining Brilliance winners were selected by a jury consisting of MTRCB chairlda. Consuelos Laguardia, IBC president Roberto del Rosario, president of IBAACTV Edgardo Sanez, papal awardee Elvira Tuguis, and BPN operations manager Edith del Rosario.

BARCENAS (TOP) AND SORIANO (ABOVE). Bata festdancer winners.

What celebrities are thankful for this year

BEING SICK AND FAMOUS DOESN'T stop Hollywood from taking a moment to gorge on turkey and take stock of this year's blessings. We asked dozens of celebrities what they're thankful for. Their answers:

I'm grateful for so many things in 2008. I feel like there's a chance of real promise in this country. —Rush Limbaugh

***

We're thankful for the fans. This year, they've been sticking around for us, and they've always been there. They're the best. They seem to our concerts. They've slept outside for shows' venues. So, we can't thank them enough. —Joe Jonas of the Jonas Brothers

***

It's all about health. My health and my loved ones' health. We're all here, and we're all OK. As we get older (chuckles), we fear, and What's going to happen next year? So far, we made it through another one. —Barry Manilow

***

I'm thankful that America stood up and did something quite extraordinary with the election. I've been over here for 12 years, and I have a green card. I've been debating becoming a citizen because it was really crucified by the country's politics. I was sort of befuddled by it. —Simon Baker

***

I'm thankful for my family. This year, there have been so many crazy ups and downs, and I've always had the same family to come home to, who treats me like the same Miley I was in Nashville. It's cool. —Miley Cyrus

***

On a personal level, I'm thankful for my family's health. And, on a global level, I'm thankful because everyone still has hope. —John Travolta

***

I'm just blessed to have one very lovely child and good health. It's something people don't think about a lot. I'm very lucky to be healthy and have healthy kids. —Reese Witherspoon

***

I'm most thankful that our country reminded everybody that we're a part of the world, and we're capable of incredible greatness! —Mary Elizabeth Winstead

***

I'm grateful for all the stress I laughed this year. That sounds crazy but as you get older, you really take a moment and go, "I laughed there. I had a severe emotional love. I took my kid to a hamburger restaurant." You know, that's it for me at this point in my life. I just take those moments and enjoy them! —Reese Reese AP

Alicia Keys, Jack White hit chart with Bond theme

LOS ANGELES—RECORDING A JAMES Bond theme is not a guarantee for chart success—just ask Tina Turner ("GoldenEye"), a-ha ("The Living Daylights") or Sheryl Crow ("Tomorrow Never Dies").

Jack White and Alicia Keys have avoided such a fate, as their duet "Another Way to Die" (which would have rhymed with "Skyfall") is the 11th official Bond theme to appear on the Hot 100 over the last 45 years, a run that started with Shirley Bassey's "Goldfinger" (No. 8 in 1965).

Most successful

The most successful Bond theme is Duran Duran's "A View to a Kill," the only song from a 007 film to achieve solo position, rival McCartney's "Live and Let Die" and Carly Simon's "Nobody Does It Better" (then "The Spy Who Loved Me") both had three-week runs at No. 2. Aside from Bassey, the only other artists to have Top 10 hits with Bond themes are Shirley Bassey (The Man With the Golden Gun"), Paul McCartney ("Live and Let Die"), Carly Simon ("Nobody Does It Better"), Duran Duran ("A View to a Kill"), Tina Turner ("GoldenEye"), a-ha ("The Living Daylights"), Sheryl Crow ("Tomorrow Never Dies"), Garbage ("The World Is Not Enough"), Madonna ("Die Another Day") and Chris Cornell ("You Know My Name").

KEYS. Sings the theme song of "Quantum of Solace" with the White Stripes' lead vocalist.

Another Way to Die" is the 11th chart entry for Keys and the first for White under his own name. He had three previous chart entries with the White Stripes, peaking at No. 26 last year with "Icky Thump." Reuters

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